

The Non-Israelite Nations in the Book of the Twelve

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The Non-Israelite Nations in the Book of the Twelve

*Thematic Coherence and the Diachronic-Synchronic
Relationship in the Minor Prophets*

By

Daniel C. Timmer



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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Timmer, Daniel C., author.

The non-Israelite nations in the Book of the Twelve : thematic coherence and the diachronic-synchronic relationship in the minor prophets / by Daniel C. Timmer.

pages cm. — (Biblical interpretation series ; Volume 135)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-90-04-23581-6 (hardback : alk. paper) — ISBN 978-90-04-29841-5 (e-book)

1. Gentiles in the Old Testament. 2. Bible. Minor Prophets—Criticism, interpretation, etc. 3. Ethnicity in the Bible. I. Title.

BS1199.N6T56 2015

224'.906—dc23

2015014568

This publication has been typeset in the multilingual “Brill” typeface. With over 5,100 characters covering Latin, IPA, Greek, and Cyrillic, this typeface is especially suitable for use in the humanities. For more information, please see www.brill.com/brill-typeface.

ISSN 0928-0731

ISBN 978-90-04-23581-6 (hardback)

ISBN 978-90-04-29841-5 (e-book)

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À Andreea, avec amour et reconnaissance



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Preface and Acknowledgements

This project is the response to a question and to an invitation. The question, posed several years ago by Dr. Miles Van Pelt, Alan Belcher Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Languages and Academic Dean of Reformed Theological Seminary (Jackson), was the following: How is one to make sense of the varied, even contradictory, fates of the non-Israelite nations in the prophetic books of the HB/OT? The invitation came via a paper presented by Dr. Aaron Schart, Professor für Altes Testament und Neues Testament at the Universität Duisburg-Essen, at the 2010 annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature. His paper sketched the main issues related to the nations in the Book of the Twelve and effectively invited further research, providing a helpful point of orientation as this project took form.

An essential element of the project was the interactive exploration of the nations-theme in the Twelve from positions across the synchronic/holistic–diachronic/compositional spectrum. This crucial element would not have been possible without the generous support I received in the form of a 2011–2012 Lilly Research Expense Grant awarded by the Association of Theological Schools, and I express my gratitude to them, and to Dr. Ehud Ben Zvi and Dr. Barry Jones for supporting my application. The interactive exploration itself was realized thanks to the participation of Dr. Aaron Schart, who kindly agreed to provide the more compositionally-focused perspective and so to make possible the interaction that was essential to the project. Always gracious, incisive, and constructive in our discussions, Dr. Schart was also the most congenial of hosts, and gave generously of his time during my weeks in Essen. I express my deep appreciation to him for his contribution to the project not despite, but in appreciation of, our different methodological orientations. I also thank Dr. Jonathan Robker and Susanne Hasselhoff, as well as Anette Sommer, for their willingness to contribute to a number of our discussions in 2011, and to those involved in the Society of Biblical Literature's Book of the Twelve group for their consistently congenial interaction with a wide variety of methods and approaches.

Thanks are also due to Dr. Miles Van Pelt and my colleagues, as well as the administration, at Reformed Theological Seminary (Jackson, MS). Miles provided enthusiastic support for this project from the beginning, and RTS provided an ideal context in which to integrate teaching and research. I am also grateful for the various forms of financial support that RTS gave to this project. Special thanks go to Mr. David Ponter and the rest of the library staff

for helping me obtain a record number of interlibrary loans—your patient collaboration was a joy to experience!

I also appreciate the support of my current colleagues in the department of Religious Studies at the University of Sudbury, and thank the staff at the libraries of the University of Sudbury and Laurentian University for their help in obtaining resources. I am likewise grateful for the University of Sudbury's support, through its Research and Publication Fund and otherwise. The editors of the *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, *Revue biblique*, and *Bulletin for Biblical Research* kindly gave their respective permission to draw upon portions of several articles: "The Use and Abuse of Power in Amos: Identity and Ideology," "Jonah's Theology of the Nations: The Interface of Religious and Ethnic Identity," and "Nahum's Representation and Response to Neo-Assyria: Imperialism as a Multifaceted Point of Contact in Nahum" in the chapters dealing with Amos, Jonah, and Nahum. Thanks go as well to the Society of Biblical Literature and E. Ben Zvi and R. Flammini, editors of the Ancient Near Eastern Monograph series, for permission to adapt part of a chapter on Zephaniah in the forthcoming *The New Form Criticism and the Book of the Twelve* (ed. M. Boda, M. Floyd, and C. Toffelmire). Last, I am grateful to Mrs. Marjolein Schaake and Mr. Pieter van Roon for their expert help in preparing the manuscript for publication.

A final, superlative *mot de remerciement* goes to my wife of over ten years, Andreea. Generous, capable, deeply caring, self-sacrificing, and wise from the beginning, she has been the most faithful and significant supporter and partner for this project and every other undertaking. Her contributions on every front are too numerous to mention, but are not for that reason any less significant. To her, with our sons Nathan and Felix, I dedicate this book with love and gratitude.

Daniel C. Timmer

Montréal, 13 April 2015

List of Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used for works not appearing in the SBL Handbook of Style.

ABG	Arbeiten zur Bibel und Ihrer Geschichte
BWANT	Beiträge zur Wissenschaft vom Alten und Neuen Testament
CEB	Commentaire évangélique biblique
EDB	<i>Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible</i> (ed. D.N. Freedman; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000)
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
HBS	Herders Biblische Studien
HTKAT	Herder Theologische Kommentar zum Alten Testament
JHS	<i>Journal of Hebrew Scriptures</i>
K-B	<i>The Hebrew and Aramic Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (ed. L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner; Study Edition; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2001)
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible and Old Testament Studies
NIDOTTE	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i> (ed. W. VanGemeren; 5 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997)
ZAH	<i>Zeitschrift für Althebräistik</i>

The Nations in the Twelve: Goal, Method, and Significance

1.1 Introduction

The goal of the present volume is to explore the literary theme of the non-Israelite nations in the Book of the Twelve, and to do so from a new perspective. It is clear that this group of prophetic books treats the nations in complex ways. Not only are the characterizations of the various nations highly diverse, but those characterizations give rise to equally diverse fates for those groups.¹ Nahum, for example, focuses relentlessly on the nation of Assyria while considering all other non-Israelite nations to be nothing worse than her victims, a role shared by Judah itself. Jonah looks at things in quite a different way, focusing on Nineveh as quintessentially wicked only to reveal near the end that she is also corrigible and capable of repentance. Further, in numerous instances a general term like ‘nations’ is used rather than a proper noun, so that the category itself is flexible in terms of its referent.² While composition-critical approaches shed light on some of these dynamics and differences, enough uncertainty remains to justify further exploration.³

The current diversity of approaches to the Twelve illustrates the methodological uncertainty that continues to bedevil the discipline of biblical studies.⁴

¹ See especially M. Roth, *Israel und die Völker im Zwölfprophetenbuch: Eine Untersuchung zu den Büchern Joel, Jona, Micha und Nahum* (FRLANT 210; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), and B.M. Zapff, “The Perspective on the Nations in the Book of Micah as a ‘Systematization’ of the Nations’ Role in Joel, Jonah and Nahum: Reflections on a Context-Oriented Exegesis,” in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve* (ed. P.L. Redditt and A. Scharf; BZAW 325; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 292–312. More briefly, P.M. Cook, “Nations,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets* (ed. M. Boda and J.G. McConville; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012), 563–68.

² Roth, *Israel und die Völker*, 293–94.

³ Roth treats only Joel 3–4, Jonah, Micah 7:8–20, and Nahum, and is mainly interested in redaction-critical reconstructions. For a more synchronic or literary critical approach, see M. Escobedo II, “‘I Will Gather the Nations’: The Fate of the Nations on the Day of Yahweh in the Book of the Twelve” (Ph.D. diss., Baylor University, 2011).

⁴ See J. Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007); J.J. Collins, *The Bible after Babel: Historical Criticism in a Postmodern Age* (Grand Rapids:

While a number of perspectival approaches to interpretation have come to prominence recently (e.g., postcolonial interpretation), the question of the text's coherence remains preeminent.⁵ At the heart of this question lies the bifurcated approach to a text's unity set out by the traditional synchronic-diachronic spectrum.⁶ While reference is made here to a methodological spectrum, and while it is unwarranted to assume that the two perspectives are inherently incompatible, many interpreters act as if the approaches are mutually exclusive and either dissect the text into units which are coherent in themselves on the basis of subtle distinctions between its lexical or other features, or assume very high levels of coherence and so potentially obscure important details in the text's content, form and formation.⁷ In what follows I offer an implicit critique of a dichotomous approach to the synchronic-diachronic relationship (better termed compositional-holistic) by integrating both approaches in the spectrum of semantic coherence.⁸

Eerdmans, 2005), for recent perspectives in favor of the historical critical program. E. Conrad, "Forming the Twelve and Forming Canon," in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve* (ed. P.L. Redditt and A. Scharf; BZAW 325; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 90–103, offers a critique of historical-critical approaches and proposes a reader-(rather than author-)oriented interpretation.

- 5 H.G. Reventlow, *From the Enlightenment to the Twentieth Century* (vol. 1 of *History of Biblical Interpretation*; trans. L.G. Perdue; 4 vols.; SBL Resources for Biblical Study 63; Atlanta: SBL, 2010), 408, 410; Collins, *The Bible after Babel*, 131–61; A. Runesson, *Exegesis in the Making: Postcolonialism and New Testament Studies* (BIS 103; Leiden: Brill, 2011).
- 6 Note M. Sweeney, "Synchronic and Diachronic Concerns in Reading the Book of the Twelve Prophets," in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve. Methodological Foundations—Redactional Processes—Historical Insights* (ed. R. Albertz, J. Nogalski, and J. Wöhrle; BZAW 433; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 21–33, and M. Boda, M. Floyd and C. Toffelmire (eds.), *The New Form Criticism and the Book of the Twelve* (SBLANEM; Atlanta: SBL, forthcoming 2015).
- 7 Against such a bipolar approach, note D. Hagstrom's caution that "Coherence is not an all or nothing matter. There are degrees of coherence and different ways of expressing coherence." Hagstrom, *The Coherence of the Book of Micah: A Literary Analysis* (SBLDS 89; Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), 125.
- 8 This terminology appears in J. Hoftijzer, "Holistic or Compositional Approach: Linguistic Remarks to the Problem," in *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis* (ed. J.C. de Moor; *OtSt* 34; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 98–114, although I define the terms somewhat differently here, with holistic referring to efforts to understand the text as a whole on the basis of its coherence, and compositional referring to efforts to understand the text as a whole in light of its composition, i.e., heterogeneity, involving both coherence and cohesion as defined below.

On that foundation, this volume traces the nations-theme across the Minor Prophets of the HB/OT, interacting regularly with both predominantly synchronic and predominantly diachronic approaches. It focuses on the text's conceptual content as the primary means of determining where a given pericope lies on the spectrum of in/coherence with respect to that theme. The conclusions in each case are presented as neutrally as possible, and emphasize the varying degrees to which so-called synchronic/holistic and diachronic/compositional approaches elucidate this or that aspect of the text's in/coherence. I hope that this avoids giving the false impression that one or another of the possible approaches fully resolves all the interpretative issues involved, many of which extend far beyond the limits of the nations-theme.⁹

The decision to restrict the investigation to the twelve Minor Prophets is not merely practical, although the inclusion of even one of the three larger writing prophets would render the present volume unworkably large. A focus on the Twelve is primarily justified, however, by recent efforts over the past few decades to understand that collection as an intentional, and so unified, corpus.¹⁰

This chapter sketches the goal, method, and anticipated significance of the present volume for biblical studies. Attention is given, first, to thematic coherence and its relation to the synchronic-diachronic spectrum that characterizes the majority of approaches to biblical literature. Second, elements of linguistics related to changes in meaning and referent are explored, since dynamism in the semantics of the nations-theme may in some cases explain phenomena which have previously been taken as evidence of dynamism in the text's compositional history. Finally, the varied orders of the Twelve in various textual traditions and their possible hermeneutical import are discussed.

9 For example, a fairly coherent text may still be redacted, and the low level of incoherence it exhibits may simply be the result of a redactor who not only thought along the lines of the text he was modifying, but also made his modifications to the text in ways consistent with its grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. This study's genre is decidedly not a verse-by-verse refutation of one or more methods, but rather a heuristic attempt to trace a theme while dealing with its most incoherent features across the Twelve.

10 P. House, *The Unity of the Twelve* (JSOTSup 97; Bible and Literature 27; Sheffield: Almond, 1990); J.D. Nogalski and M.A. Sweeney (eds.), *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve* (SBL Symposium Series 15; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2000); P. Redditt and A. Scharf (eds.), *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW 325; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003); R. Albertz, J. Nogalski, and J. Wöhrle (eds.), *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve. Methodological Foundations—Redactional Processes—Historical Insights* (BZAW 433; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012).

1.2 The Method: Thematic Conceptual Criticism in Synchronic-Diachronic Context

Biblical studies as a discipline is naturally concerned with in/coherence at every level, from individual verses on through progressively larger units of text to include whole books.¹¹ Here we will focus on the coherence of one aspect of the Minor Prophets (frequently ‘the Twelve’), the nations-theme. While coherence generally refers to “the grammatical and semantic interconnectedness between sentences that form a text,” not every level of coherence will be explored, and our focus will be semantic or conceptual.¹²

In a well-reasoned treatment of the coherence of the book of Micah, K. Cuffey helpfully distinguishes four kinds of coherence that can characterize texts: ‘internal coherence,’ which concerns “the relations of section to section or to the whole” and is established by consistent style, conjunctions, and other syntactical and lexical elements; ‘structural coherence,’ in which the literary order of the text’s units dictates the reading strategy (chronological, spatial, logical, and so on); ‘coherence of perspective,’ which refer to the consistency of the author’s point of view or more broadly to his assumptions or world view; and ‘coherence of theme,’ which refers not to a theme that is itself coherent, but to a complete text that is united by means of a common theme.¹³

11 The unity of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament, and the question of its relationship to the New Testament, are even more complex issues and lie outside the scope of this study. On the possibility of a Tanak-theology, compare S. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (NSBT 15; Leicester: Apollos, 2003) and the contrasting views of J. Levenson, “Why Jews Are Not Interested in Biblical Theology,” in idem, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1987), 33–61, and M. Sweeney, “Jewish Biblical Theology,” in *The Hebrew Bible: New Insights and Scholarship* (ed. F. Greenspahn; New York: New York University Press, 2008), 191–208; note also Sweeney’s *Tanak: A Theological and Critical Introduction to the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011). For different but representative positions on the relation of the Tanak to the Christian New Testament, see H. Clavier, *Les variétés de la pensée biblique et le problème de son unité* (NTSup; Leiden: Brill, 1976), and the programmatic essays in T.D. Alexander and B.S. Rosner (eds.), *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 1–112.

12 H. Bussmann (ed.), *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics* (2nd ed.; London: Routledge, 1999), 198.

13 K.H. Cuffey, “Remnant, Redactor, and Biblical Theologian: A Comparative Study of Coherence in Micah and the Twelve,” in Nogalski and Sweeney (eds.), *Reading and Hearing*, 185–208 (186–87). Although Cuffey does not use their terminology, this is what M.R. Jacobs, *The Conceptual Coherence of the Book of Micah* (JSOTSup 322; Sheffield:

It is helpful to note that Cuffey's first two categories refer mainly to surface-level coherence (lexical, grammatical, syntactical), which is better termed 'cohesion,' while the latter two are closer to the conceptual or semantic level, and so are properly seen as aspects of 'coherence.' In what follows I will distinguish (surface-level) 'cohesion' from (concept-level) 'coherence' in order to clarify this study's focus on the text's conceptual content more than on its surface features.¹⁴

1.2.1 *Conceptual Coherence*

Our focus on the text's semantic content does not exclude any of the methods associated with literary and historical criticism. On the contrary, attention to conceptual features is inherent to those approaches "rather than a replacement of them."¹⁵ At the same time, not all aspects of the text maintain the same relation to one another, and this raises the question of which should have methodological priority.

Conceptual coherence approaches in particular are holistic, meaning that they attempt to integrate in their reflections and conclusions all the features of the text, surface-level and content-level alike. Conceptual analysis is defined by Lee as follows:

this approach views the nature of texts as conceptualized linguistic-semantic entities; it pays attention to the information gained from both the surface of a text and the subsurface textual level; it attempts to reconstruct the infratextual conceptual system operative in the text; and it

Sheffield Academic, 2001) and W.W. Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness in Israel's Migratory Campaign* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) mean by conceptual coherence.

- 14 "In a narrower sense, coherence is separate from grammatical cohesion and specifically signifies the semantic meaning and the cohesion of the basic interconnection of the meanings of the text, its content/semantic and cognitive structure. Semantic coherence can be represented as a sequence of propositions that form a constellation of abstract concepts and connected relations." *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*, 198. The distinction between cohesion as a textual or linguistic phenomenon and coherence as a mental phenomenon in the mind of the reader is widely accepted but need not be stressed here; see further T. Sanders and H. Pander Maat, "Cohesion and Coherence: Linguistic Approaches," in *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics* (2nd ed.; London: Elsevier, 2006), 592; E.J. van Wolde, "The Creation of Coherence," *Semeia* 81 (1998): 159–74.
- 15 Jacobs, *Conceptual Coherence*, 56; similarly A. Piñero and J. Peláez, *The Study of the New Testament: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Tools for Biblical Studies 3; Leiden: Deo, 2003), 337–39, and so also K.P. Hong, "Synchrony and Diachrony in Contemporary Biblical Interpretation," *CBQ* 75 (2013): 521–39.

utilizes a set of terms—concept, integrity, composition, and structure—in a distinct way from other critical methods.¹⁶

Defined this way, conceptual analysis is heuristic and recognizes the uniqueness of each text. It begins with the text as a whole, an important methodological control.¹⁷ The surface elements of the text are analyzed first, but this step is followed immediately by an analysis of the “underlying concepts that are unique to the particular text” since it is those concepts which have given rise to the text and indeed influenced the choice of surface elements.¹⁸ Finally, the relationship between surface analysis and conceptual analysis is critically considered, with each open to correction or modification in light of the other.¹⁹

To avoid circularity and subjectivity, the practitioner of conceptual coherence must ensure that his or her analysis achieves the following:²⁰

- 1 Accounts “for all the explicit aspects of the surface text.”
- 2 Weighs and compares “all the explicit aspects of the surface text in terms of their contributions on [*sic*] cohesiveness of the text.” By cohesion is meant “the integrative aspects of the various linguistic and syntactic elements whose presence is explicit on the surface of the text.”²¹
- 3 Weighs and compares “all the explicit aspects of the surface text in terms of their directness in expressing the text’s underlying concepts. This comparison is crucial in the process of determining the dominant concept to which others are systematically related.”²²

It is possible in the space of a monograph to offer a conceptual-coherence interpretation of a relatively short text (M. Jacobs does so with the book of

¹⁶ Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 47.

¹⁷ Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 54; A.J. Campbell, “Form Criticism’s Future,” in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (ed. M.A. Sweeney and E. Ben Zvi; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 15–31 (24). The significance of this point is brought to bear on biblical interpretation in F. Landy “Three Sides of a Coin: In Conversation with Ben Zvi and Nogalski,” *JHS* 10 (2010): article 11, esp. pp. 9–10, 13–14, 16–17.

¹⁸ Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 57.

¹⁹ Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 60, seems to suggest that the comparison of the two types of analysis can only correct the conceptual analysis, but his method allows for both, something that is necessitated by the priority given to concepts as the essence of the text.

²⁰ Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 60–62.

²¹ Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 58 n. 26.

²² Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 61.

Micah, W.W. Lee with Numbers 10:11–36:13, and R. Knierim with Leviticus 1:1–9), but the method is too extensive to apply to the Twelve within the limits of a single volume.²³ At the same time, the priority of the text's semantic level is a strong incentive to adopt such an approach on a more limited scale.²⁴ This reasoning provides the basis for this volume's focus on the coherence of a single theme within the Twelve.²⁵ There is great promise in the mutual illumination of the conceptual or thematic coherence characteristically associated with synchronic/holistic methods and the incohesion highlighted by diachronic/compositional methods, and the method sketched and implemented here pursues fruitful interchange between these and other perspectives on the text.²⁶

1.2.2 *Thematic Coherence*

At this point we do well to note Jacobs's suggestion that

in the cases where a particular semantic field is the focus of analysis—rather than a text unit—the same objectives apply to each unit where the semantic field is represented. The goal of the method would then be to identify from among the various occurrences of the terms the common denominator that unifies the particularity of the occurrences. Even then, concept-critical analysis recognizes the probability of diametrically opposed uses of a concept.²⁷

Because the methodological bases of conceptual coherence approaches are consistent with the aim of the present study, and can be applied to a single theme without attempting to integrate the entirety of each book covered, a thematic study of the nations in the Twelve that avoids a dichotomous approach to synchronic/holistic and diachronic/compositional aspects of the texts

23 Jacobs, *Conceptual Coherence*, Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, R.P. Knierim, *Text and Concept in Leviticus 1:1–9* (FAT 2; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1992).

24 Sweeney reaches the same conclusion, "Synchronic and Diachronic Concerns," 22.

25 A literary theme is commonly understood to be the "content core of a text which carries its communicative function;" Bussmann, *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*, 481, s.v. 'text theme.'

26 J. Barr, "The Synchronic, the Diachronic and the Historical: A Triangular Relationship?," in *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis* (ed. J.C. de Moor; *OtSt* 34; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 1–14 (3), suggests the correlation of different phases in Israel's history with different (synchronic) phases in the development of a language such that synchronic (which cannot have unlimited extent) is compatible with diachronic, and Hong agrees, "Synchrony and Diachrony," 527–28.

27 Jacobs, *Conceptual Coherence*, 57; cf. *ibid.*, 193.

involved is both feasible and methodologically defensible.²⁸ The approach to the Twelve followed here is thus self-consciously focused on the level of meaning, i.e., the level of the whole discourse that constitutes a book.²⁹ This method recognizes the varying surface-level terminology under which the ‘nations’ are presented, but does not automatically let surface-level factors (including erratic verbal syntax, *Numeruswechsel*, etc.) take primacy over the text’s aggregate semantic content. Such elements are constitutive of linguistic cohesion but not of semantic coherence as defined in this study.

By semantic or conceptual ‘coherence’ is meant not merely non-contradiction, but also the meaning-producing interrelation of various sections of text with one another. In terms redolent of Lee’s definition (cited above), coherence means that an “infratextual conceptual system” does indeed exist in the text, and that this ‘conceptual system’ embodies the semantic consistency and wholeness of the text. On this understanding it is not problematic if a single text includes more than one perspective on a subject (e.g., the possibility of some of the nations escaping or surviving divine judgment) as long as there exists a unifying conceptual basis that frames the particularities of the various occurrences of the subject in the text.³⁰ In other words, thematic complexity does not necessarily entail thematic incoherence.

The primacy of semantics also bears on the question, raised earlier, of the methodological priority of readings focused on semantics over readings focused on other features. Among the various aspects and elements of a text, theme is “more closely related to the purpose of the work than any other.”³¹ Consequently, a text’s conceptual coherence “overrides compositional unity

28 By ‘theme’ I simply mean the statement that a work is making about its subject; see J.T. LeCureux, *The Thematic Unity of the Book of the Twelve* (HBM; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2012), 27. It is self-evident that the theme can refer to the subject using any number of lexemes, and is not tied to a neatly limited group of words.

29 Meaning has both textual and extratextual elements; cf. Bussmann, *Routledge Dictionary of Language and Linguistics*, 299.

30 Sanders and Pander Maat, “Cohesion and Coherence,” distinguish between ‘referential coherence,’ in which various units of text refer to the same entity, and ‘relational coherence,’ in which various text units are connected by ‘coherence relations’ like causality. Both facets of coherence are involved in the ‘semantic coherence’ that I describe here.

31 Jacobs, *Conceptual Coherence*, 47, citing Cuffey, “The Coherence of Micah: A Review of the Proposals and a New Interpretation” (Ph.D. diss., Drew University, 1987), 130. W. Brueggemann similarly argues that a focus on “individual paragraphs or episodes” leads the reader to ignore the whole text’s “larger intentionality;” “Narrative Coherence and Theological Intentionality in 1 Samuel 18,” *CBQ* 55 (1993): 225–43 (225).

because the latter owes its existence to the former.”³² While this might seem to dispense too quickly with compositional (surface cohesion) elements that have been the focus of much historical criticism, it is simply the expression in methodological terms of the axiom that meaning arises from combinations of words, and the primary semantic unit is the sentence rather than the word (the latter often having been employed for redaction- and composition-critical arguments for incoherence).³³ There is therefore ample theoretical justification for the methodological priority of an attempt to read the text as a whole before concluding that insufficient coherence of the whole requires it to be broken into disparate parts, each of which is (individually) internally cohesive and coherent.³⁴ In other terms, a holistic reading must be attempted first,

32 Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 59. See the similar reasoning and conclusions of H.C.P. Kim, “Form Criticism in Dialogue with Other Criticisms: Building the Multidimensional Structures of Texts and Concepts,” in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (ed. M.A. Sweeney and E. Ben Zvi; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 85–104 (100–102).

33 “The linguistic bearer of the theological statement is usually the sentence and the still larger literary complex and not the word or the morphological and syntactical mechanisms.” J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 269. The same identification of the sentence (rather than the word) as the prime semantic unit occurs in more general linguistic thought as well: “molecularity is not a requirement but a finding; not a hypothetical universal canon, but a formal characterization which mirrors an empirical discovery. Hence it can operate as a constraint on the attempts to produce a theory of meaning in respect of biblical languages;” A. Gibson, *Biblical Semantic Logic: A Preliminary Analysis* (2nd ed.; The Biblical Seminar 75; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 212. Gibson goes on (214) to cite M. Dummett, “What is a Theory of Meaning (11),” in *Truth and Meaning: Essays in Semantics* (ed. G. Evans and J. McDowell; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976) 67–137 (79): “The difference between a molecular and a holistic view of language is not that, on a molecular view each sentence could, in principle, be understood in isolation, but that, on a holistic view, it is impossible fully to understand any sentence without knowing the entire language, whereas, on a molecular view there is, for each sentence, a determinate fragment of the language a knowledge of which will suffice for a complete understanding of that sentence.”

34 A.J.O. van der Wal recognizes that this is a presupposition, “Toward a Synchronic Analysis of the Masoretic Text of the Book of Jeremiah,” in *Reading the Book of Jeremiah: A Search for Coherence* (ed. M. Kessler; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 13–24 (13), yet it is difficult to imagine how a reader might proceed otherwise. Of course, literary and conceptual coherence may well be at odds: B. Becking concludes regarding Jer 30:12–17 that “the parts of a text may, in spite of their differences in form or literary genre and despite some inconsistency on the level of a first reading, be interpreted as a coherent whole, expressing a single idea or a coherent set of ideas;” “Divine Reliability and the Conceptual Coherence of the Book of Consolation (Jeremiah 30–31),” in *Reading the Book of Jeremiah*:

and only on that basis can compositional features be identified and interrelated.³⁵ This study attempts to hold both facets of the text together, beginning its treatment of a prophetic book with a survey of all terminology relevant to the nations, a highly diverse lexical category. It then proceeds to consider the semantics of the nations theme, taking into account both the varying terminology and all other surface features, and focuses on the source and nature of the theme's coherence or lack thereof.

These points lead us conclude that the more one is able to attend to statements and thus to semantics, the closer one comes to understanding the text as a whole (assuming that it is coherent as such), or (alternatively) of its largest coherent units. But more is bound up with these points than that simple truism. When, conversely, the reader sets linguistic criteria that operate on the level of *cohesion* as the means for establishing *coherence*, the possibility of finding coherence in the text (again assuming its coherence) is sharply reduced.³⁶

A Search for Coherence (ed. M. Kessler; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 163–80 (168–69). J. Barr's contention that developments can explain the final form but not vice versa ("The Synchronic, the Diachronic and the Historical," 6–7) works well in the field of linguistics, not least because anterior phases of the language are preserved as data. When applied to texts, however, the plurality of possible explanations of development illustrates the lack of commonly agreed upon points along the diachronic spectrum from which to start. See further on the methodological priority of an (attempted) synchronic reading M. Sweeney, "The Place and Function of Joel in the Book of the Twelve," in Redditt and Scharf (eds.), *Thematic Threads*, 133–54, esp. 137 n. 11.

35 Hoftijzer similarly argues that "the first question one has to ask... is how to decide whether there is reason to think of a compositional/redactional history of the text in question," "Holistic or Compositional Approach?," 100.

36 Not a few have argued that this has occurred in some source-criticism of the Pentateuch, for example: see R.N. Whybray, *The Making of the Pentateuch: A Methodological Study* (JSOTSup 53; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1987). It is interesting to observe these somewhat contradictory movements in Wellhausen's early isolation of the *quatuor* (four-covenant) source in Genesis 1–11 (which undoes the literary unity of that section) and his assertion that E and J in Genesis 27–36 were so closely intertwined as to make impossible their disentanglement (essentially affirming their unity unless a distinguishing divine name were present); J. Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century: England and Germany* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1985), 260–62. J. Levenson, reflecting on the Hebrew Bible's "literary simultaneity" and B. Childs's canonical criticism, argues that "The application of a historical, or diachronic, perspective—even when it is denied a controlling role—severely undermines the principle that the Bible is a unity" (*The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 71.

Eve-Marie Becker, reflecting the position of numerous linguists, argues that even if a text is judged to lack cohesion on linguistic and text-grammatical grounds, the reader can still profitably pursue the text's coherence. Indeed, it is this very process that will bring to light the cognitive-linguistic (in the discipline of text-linguistics) or hermeneutical means (in the realm of literature more generally) by which the reader apprehends the concepts expressed by the text. Becker also insists that many aspects of readers' conclusions regarding a given text's coherence are extra-textual and not based on linguistic or text-grammatical features.³⁷ This call to methodological self-awareness and integration should find an attentive ear among biblical interpreters regardless of their preferred or primary method, and underlines the value of examining features within the Twelve that appear to render this or that book (and the collection) incoherent in one way or another.

In order to preserve the heuristic potential of a thematic investigation, one must examine the theme across the text in which it appears, even if there are grounds for suspecting that the text lacks cohesion or coherence in other ways. Jacobs observes something similar when she says that "the coherence of the whole cannot be determined by the observation of only parts of that whole."³⁸ It is important to note, however, that coherence in no way implies uniformity or continuity. This is true of an individual theme and of the interrelations of themes: "unity or unified composition in a text or book does not necessarily mean that the author intended all elements, themes, or concepts to be coherent. Rather, often [the] editor/redactor somehow deliberately left the tension of concepts together, making the whole ambiguous and multivalent."³⁹ There is similarly no ground for assuming that all the prophetic books treated here cohere in the same way or to the same degree.⁴⁰

1.2.3 *Word-based and Semantics-based Intertextuality*

The varying degrees of coherence within the constituent books of the Twelve are complemented by the well-known (if complex) intertextual relationships

37 E.-M. Becker, "Was ist 'Kohärenz'? ein Beitrag zur Präzisierung eines exegetischen Leitkriteriums," *ZNW* 94 (2003): 97–121 (117–19).

38 Jacobs, *Conceptual Coherence*, 194. Hong's conclusion is similar: "A redaction-critical survey must begin with the synchronic analysis of the final text and move on to restore the synchronic layers of pre-text. At the same time, one examines the interrelationship between these stages, which, by definition, constitutes a diachronic analysis." Hong, "Synchrony and Diachrony," 535.

39 Kim, "Form Criticism in Dialogue," 100–101.

40 Cf. Jacobs, *Conceptual Coherence*, 229.

that exist between many of their parts.⁴¹ Since many of these interrelated pericopes deal with the nations, we are obliged to consider the nature of the intertextual relationships that obtain between them. Further, this study's attempt to trace a common theme across books that are very closely related in historical terms by virtue of their production in pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic Israelite and Judahite society is in effect an intertextual endeavor, and likewise demands that we approach the exercise with attention to method and presuppositions.⁴²

Although most approaches to intertextuality are lexeme-based, it is equally important for interpretation to identify concepts that are shared by texts, since concepts may or may not be attested by a fixed group of words. Perhaps the most convincing reason for treating semantic intertextuality on par with lexical intertextuality is the axiom that the sentence (along with higher levels of discourse) is the primary linguistic and semantic vehicle. Since intertextuality is focused on meaning, it follows that it should also attend not to the mere repetition of words, but to the interplay of thought (whether continuous or discontinuous) between texts.⁴³ This has become increasingly accepted in the

41 See the methodologically focused contributions by R. Schultz, "The Ties that Bind: Intertextuality, the Identification of Verbal Parallels, and Reading Strategies in the Book of the Twelve," in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve* (ed. P.L. Redditt and A. Scharf; BZAW 325; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 27–45, and J. Nogalski, "Intertextuality in the Twelve," in *Forming Prophetic Literature* (ed. J.W. Watts and P.R. House; JSOTSup 235; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 102–24, as well as Nogalski's more expansive investigations in his *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW 217; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993) and *Redactional Processes in the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW 218; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1993), and most recently J. Wöhrle, "So Many Cross-References! Methodological Reflections on the Problem of Intertextual Relationships and Their Significance for Redaction Critical Analysis," in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve. Methodological Foundations—Redactional Processes—Historical Insights* (ed. R. Albertz, J. Nogalski, and J. Wöhrle; BZAW 433; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 3–20.

42 Note the suggestion of E. Ben Zvi, "Is the Twelve Hypothesis Likely from an Ancient Readers Perspective?" in *Two Sides of a Coin: Juxtaposing Views on Interpreting the Book of the Twelve / the Twelve Prophetic Books* (ed. T. Römer; Analecta Gorgiana 201; Piscataway: Gorgias, 2009), 47–96 (80–82) that "the same literati" may have redacted several prophetic books at one time.

43 M. Fishbane describes biblical intertextuality as "a form that literary creativity takes when innovation is grounded in tradition;" "Types of Biblical Intertextuality," in *Congress Volume: Oslo 1998* (ed. A. Lemaire and M. Sæbø; VTSup 80; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 39. The semantic focus of intertextuality is demonstrated by M. Wilcox, "Text form," in *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture* (ed. D.A. Carson and H.G.M. Williamson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 193–204.

field of linguistics, which has progressively broadened the scope of intertextuality to include phenomena like ‘adaptation’ and ‘appropriation’ of levels of discourse higher than individual words. Accordingly, whole discourses are increasingly taken into account in intertextual studies.⁴⁴

It is also clear that lexeme-based intertextuality has sometimes been applied woodenly, as if the appearance of one author’s vocabulary in a text attributed to another indicated direct literary (especially redactional) or historical links.⁴⁵ The semantics of even simple (lexeme-based) intertextuality are considerably more complicated than such approaches suggest, however. “Quotation is . . . the most condensed form of paradigm shift, transmuting the context, form and meaning of the items both inside and outside the quotation marks. . . . [It] singles out in one short encapsulation a reference combining many [references].”⁴⁶ This complex definition of intertextuality recognizes that while each book of the Twelve has an incipit of one sort or another and is therefore identifiable as a book in its own right, they are simultaneously inter-related in numerous ways.⁴⁷

1.2.4 *Thematic Dynamism and the Potential for Referent Transformation*

Since a theme need not be static or free from discontinuity to be coherent, it is helpful to contrast how a theme appears in present- and future-oriented contexts in the writing prophets, who routinely sketch a future significantly different from their present.⁴⁸ As in narrative, where development ties together

44 J. Sanders, *Adaptation and Appropriation* (The New Critical Idiom; London: Routledge, 2006), 17.

45 See, for example, W.L. Holladay, “Reading Zephaniah with a Concordance: Suggestions for a Redaction History,” *JBL* 120 (2001): 671–84.

46 M. Orr, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* (Cambridge: Polity, 2003), 133.

47 Ben Zvi, “Is the Twelve Hypothesis Likely,” 73. Rendtorff represents a mediating position: “The diachronic features are not only obvious but are marked explicitly by the different datings of a number of writings. On the other hand, those who gave the writings their shape (whatever we call them) obviously wanted the reader to read the writings [of the 12] as a connected whole and to reflect on their different messages.” R. Rendtorff, “How to Read the Book of the Twelve as a Theological Unity,” in *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve* (ed. J.D. Nogalski and M.A. Sweeney; SBL Symposium 15; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 75–87.

48 See, e.g., the role of ‘transformations’ in Becking’s treatment of divine reliability and relationship in Jeremiah 30–31 (“Divine Reliability,” 178), and contrast S. De Vries’s appeal to redaction to explain the differences between present- and future-oriented passages in the prophets, “Futurism in the Pre-exilic Minor Prophets Compared with That of the Postexilic Minor Prophets,” in Redditt and Schart (eds.), *Thematic Threads*, 252–72.

initial and final situations by chronological and/or logical relationships, so too in the prophetic books of the HB/OT there is generally a movement from beginning to end, though this is clearer in some cases than in others.⁴⁹ A parade example would be the general recognition that Isaiah is an anthology which nonetheless moves from the Judah of the authorial present to the end of all things.⁵⁰

While significantly different treatments or aspects of the same literary theme have often been attributed to different authors, this is not the only plausible explanation of some semantic discontinuity. G.B. Caird developed a helpful perspective according to which some aspects of dynamism in the prophets can be understood without immediate recourse to compositional solutions:

The prophets looked to the future with bifocal vision. With their near sight they foresaw imminent historical events which would be brought about by familiar human causes. . . . With their long sight they saw the day of the Lord; and it was in the nature of the prophetic experience that they were able to adjust their focus so as to impose the one image on the other and produce a synthetic picture.⁵¹

Because the thematic dynamism produced by this sort of synthetic overlay of one image upon another is prominent in Hebrew prophetic literature, and because the phenomenon speaks directly to the synchronic-diachronic question, this study pays particular attention to instances in which thematic discontinuity might be better explained by appealing to the text's dynamic semantic discourse (i.e., the transformation or redefinition of some of its referents) than to its dynamic history of formation (i.e., chronologically or conceptually distinguished authorial hands). This has the potential to shed new light on some of the radical discontinuities that appear with some frequency in the Twelve.⁵² Moreover, insofar as the nations-theme is coherent within a given book (whether in a fairly linear fashion or by means of patterned in/

49 Van Wolde, "The Creation of Coherence," 161. Van Wolde observes that in narrative, "textual order reflects, or is understood as reflecting, the order in the experienced world," a presupposition that need not apply to prophetic literature, or even to narratives which exhibit chronological displacement (167).

50 Cf. J. Vermeylen, "L'unité du livre d'Isaïe," in *The Book of Isaiah/Le Livre d'Isaïe* (ed. J. Vermeylen; BETL 81; Leuven: Peeters, 1989), 11–53.

51 G.B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (with a foreword by N.T. Wright; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 258.

52 Cf. S.M. Meier, *Themes and Transformations in Old Testament Prophecy* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2009).

coherence),⁵³ its interconnections with other themes may suggest similarly productive reevaluations of their in/coherence as well.⁵⁴

1.2.5 *Defining the Non-Israelite 'Nations'*

Given this study's inductive and heuristic approach, no preliminary definition of 'nations' is necessary. It is useful, however, to sketch the main lines of the semantic fields used to express the concept. These lines include proper nouns such as Philistia, Edom, Ammon, etc.; political/social language, especially גוי, עם, and ממלכה but also rarer items like אֵי; and generic nouns, especially enemies (אֵיב, Zeph 3:15), remnant (שְׁאֵרִית, Amos 9:12), and remainder (יתר, Zech 14:16). Predictably, some contexts use still more terms whose delineation here would prove tiresome.

Additional complexity arises from the fact that not only are these labels sometimes dynamic and other times static, but these same texts create other aspects of the identity of the 'nations' by using other semantic fields such as language (Zech 8:23), genealogical descent (Amos 9:7), national citizenship (Hosea 9:6), and religion (Nah 1:14). Attention will accordingly be given to how these means of identification relate to the theme of the nations, although a theoretical analysis of how the various kinds of identity interrelate lies beyond the scope of the present work.⁵⁵ Because the construction of identity, both for the nations and for Israel/Judah, lies near the heart of the thematic dynamism that is the object of this study, it will receive substantial attention, and the burgeoning field of ethnicity and identity studies will be of great help.⁵⁶

53 For this phenomenon in narrative, see R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 133, cited in Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness*, 67.

54 Note the varying ways in which thematic coherence interfaces with synchronic and diachronic approaches in A.L.H.M. van Wieringen and A. van der Woude (eds.), *'Enlarge the Site of Your Tent': The City as Unifying Theme in Isaiah* (OtSt 58; Leiden: Brill, 2011).

55 See, on ethnicity, J. Bosman, *Social identity in Nahum: A theological-ethical enquiry* (Biblical Intersections 1: Piscataway: Gorgias, 2008), 55–90 (esp. 66–68); M.R. Kreitzer, *The Concept of Ethnicity in the Bible: A Theological Analysis* (with a foreword by Enoch Wan; Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2008); R.S. Sadler Jr., *Can a Cushite Change His Skin? An Examination of Race, Ethnicity, and Othering in the Hebrew Bible* (LHBOTS 425; London: T. & T. Clark, 2005); M.G. Brett (ed.), *Ethnicity and the Bible* (Biblical Interpretation 19; Leiden: Brill, 1996).

56 It is sufficient in this context to define ethnicity only roughly, whether primacy is given to descent from forefathers, ancestral migrations, and communal sense of history, as suggested by K. Sparks, *Ethnicity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1998), or to other factors like language and appearance. At the same time, I recognize that some

Care will be taken not to impose modern nation-state conceptions upon the various prophetic statements that constitute the semantic field of non-Israelite nations.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, individual presuppositions, including the present author's location in the west at the dawn of the twenty-first century, inevitably manifest themselves in the present work. However, the promise of the hermeneutical spiral, in which repeated readings of a text can be self-correcting and so lead the reader to a progressively more faithful reading of the text, means that it is not impossible to overcome (at least in significant measure) such weaknesses.⁵⁸

1.2.6 *The Twelve and Their Orders*

Finally, this study's focus on the twelve Minor Prophets as a group necessitates consideration of their order and the manner in which they were collected. This is not only a historical question, but also one that has become increasingly prominent in discussions of the interpretation of the Twelve following the work of J. Nogalski, A. Scharf, and others on their redactional unity.⁵⁹

of these elements suit better Israelite conceptions of ethnic identity as attested in the HB than do others, and that one cannot assume that contemporary and ancient definitions of ethnicity are essentially equivalent; see M.G. Brett, "Interpreting Ethnicity: Method, Hermeneutics, Ethics," in M.G. Brett (ed.), *Ethnicity and the Bible* (Biblical Interpretation 19; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 3–22. Note also the important work of A. Hagedorn, *Die Anderen im Spiegel: Israels Auseinandersetzung mit den Völkern in den Büchern Nahum, Zefanja, Obadja und Joel* (BZAW 414; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011).

57 See A.D. Smith, *The Cultural Foundations of Nations: Hierarchy, Covenant, and Republic* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), M.T. Larsen, "The Tradition of Empire in Mesopotamia," in *Power and Propaganda: A Symposium on Ancient Empires* (ed. M.T. Larsen; Copenhagen Studies in Assyria 7; Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1979), 75–103, T. Harrison, "Ancient and Modern Imperialism," *Greece & Rome* 55 (2008): 1–22; and W. Scheidel, "Studying the State," *Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East* (ed. P.F. Bang and W. Scheidel; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 5–57.

58 Here I draw on Gadamer's understanding of how the horizons of text and interpreter merge, especially as that comes to expression in the 'hermeneutical spiral.' On the former, see A. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein* (with a foreword by J.B. Torrance; Carlisle: Paternoster; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 307–08; for the latter, K. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?: The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 367–452.

59 Nogalski, *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve*, and idem, *Redactional Processes in the Book of the Twelve*. His arguments have been further developed by A. Scharf, *Die Entstehung des Zwölfprophetenbuchs: Neubearbeitungen von Amos im Rahmen schriftlennebergergreifender Redaktionsprozesse* (BZAW 260; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998) and J. Wöhrle,

It remains a contentious question, however, largely due to the paucity and variety of evidence.

After a reference to Jeremiah and Ezekiel's ministries and before mentioning Zerubbabel, Joshua, and Nehemiah, Sirach (written around 180 BCE) refers to twelve prophetic books without specifying their order: "May the bones of the twelve prophets revive from the tomb, for they comforted Jacob and redeemed him in faith and hope" (49:10; cf. *Baba Bathra* 13b). While this demonstrates that the Twelve were reckoned as a group, it does not follow that they were a (redacted) book, i.e., a multi-book unity.⁶⁰ A. Scharf argues from the facts that all twelve Minor Prophets appear on one scroll from Qumran, and that they follow each other after only three empty lines rather than beginning a new column, that the scribe responsible for that scroll understood the books to be a unity.⁶¹ E. Ben Zvi, however, counters that such a unified understanding is impossible since the scribe left headings for each book, some quite extensive and specific.⁶² One could further argue that the presence of these superscriptions obviated the need to begin a new column, since the end of one book and the beginning of another was already sufficiently clear. Ben Zvi concludes that a multiple-book-unity approach to the Twelve creates literary unity from factors which are of limited significance.⁶³ While rejecting a single-book approach to the Twelve, however, Ben Zvi considers it likely that among twelve individual books all authored in the same "social group" (but not necessarily simultaneously) there was "a (largely) shared discourse, a common linguistic heritage, implied 'intertextuality', and shared literary/ideological tendencies."⁶⁴

Die frühen Sammlungen des Zwölfprophetenbuches. Entstehung und Komposition (BZAW 360; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), idem, *Der Abschluss des Zwölfprophetenbuches: Buchübergreifende Redaktionsprozesse in den späten Sammlungen* (BZAW 389; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), among others.

60 Pace A. Scharf, "Das Zwölfprophetenbuch als redaktionelle Großeinheit," *TLZ* 133 (2008): 227–46 (227). Sweeney, "The Place and Function of Joel," mentions their "collective citation" in Sirach, 4 Ezra 1:39–40, Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah 4:22, and Lives of the Prophets but concludes that they are a "single unit or collection," a description which retains appropriate ambiguity as to their literary unity (132). This nuance is also noted by B. Lim, "Which Version of the Twelve Prophets Should Christians Read? A Case for Reading the LXX Twelve Prophets," *JTI* 7.1 (2013): 21–36 (23).

61 Scharf, "Großeinheit," 227–28.

62 E. Ben Zvi, "Twelve Prophetic Books or 'The Twelve'?", in *Forming Prophetic Literature* (ed. J.W. Watts and P.R. House; JSOTSup 235; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 125–56 (131, 137).

63 Ben Zvi, "Twelve Prophetic Books," 140.

64 Ben Zvi, "Twelve Prophetic Books," 155.

In this vein K. Spronk makes plausible arguments, based more on semantics than on redaction *tout court*, that Jonah was composed with Joel and Nahum (and possibly others of the Twelve) in mind.⁶⁵

Data from about the same period as Sirach comes from fragments of 4QXII = 4Q76 (ca. 150 BCE), but there is ongoing disagreement over whether those fragments in fact attest the order Malachi-Jonah.⁶⁶ While these and other details await resolution, the most recent evaluations of the data suggest that multiple literary editions of the Twelve existed near the turn of the era.⁶⁷

In light of this diversity of order among the ancient witnesses to the Minor Prophets and the unclear significance of the various features mentioned above, it seems unwise to attribute too much weight to a given sequence.⁶⁸ Furthermore, even if only one order were attested, the theoretical basis for assigning hermeneutical significance to that order has yet to be established.⁶⁹ This study will make reference to the Massoretic order more frequently than to others, but the study's conclusions are correlated with both the Massoretic and LXX orders.

Apart from the question of the hermeneutical significance of the books' relative order, however, it is still feasible to explore the coherence of the Twelve as a unit. In terms of Cuffey's four-fold typology of coherence, coherence is easily

65 K. Spronk, "Jonah, Nahum, and the Book of the Twelve: A Response to Jakob Wöhrle," *JHS* 9 (2009): article 8.

66 This topic is addressed by P. Guillaume, "The Unlikely Malachi-Jonah Sequence (4QXIIa)," *JHS* 7 (2007): article 15.

67 See for this conclusion G.J. Brooke, "The Twelve Minor Prophets and the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Congress Volume: Leiden 2004* (ed. A. Lemaire; VTSup 109; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 19–43; M. Beck, "Das Dodekapropheton als Anthologie," *ZAW* 118 (2006): 558–83; Sweeney, "Synchronic and Diachronic Concerns," 25–30. The orders are tabulated in P. Guillaume, "A Reconsideration of Manuscripts Classified as Scrolls of the Twelve Minor Prophets (XII)," *JHS* 7 (2007): article 16: p. 9.

68 So also B. Lim, "Which Version of the Twelve Prophets Should Christians Read?," esp. 25–28. Schart expects less unity in the Twelve than in books that bear one superscription ("Großeinheit," 229), and appears comfortable with Beck's designation of them as an anthology (M. Beck, "Anthologie"), although Schart argues very carefully and extensively for an intentional and redactional process of collecting the Twelve (*Entstehung*).

69 Cf. J. Barton, *Holy Writings, Sacred Text: The Canon in Early Christianity* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), who states of the order of biblical books and its possible hermeneutical significance that "there is not much evidence that people in antiquity anticipated such thoughts" (156). Contrast the effort by Sweeney, "Place and Function of Joel," to determine how the differing placement of Joel in the MT and LXX orders influences or evidences interpretation of each tradition's corpus of the Twelve.

seen in the corpus's focus on common themes, and this increases the feasibility of the present volume's focus on the nations.⁷⁰

1.3 The Significance of This Study

The significance of the present study lies, first, in the pressing need for a study of the nations-theme across the twelve Minor Prophets. Second, the field of biblical studies remains in need of a rapprochement between those on both sides of the synchronic-diachronic spectrum in order to facilitate critical evaluation of the decisions that make some interpretations of biblical literature more synchronic/holistic and others more diachronic/compositional. The outcomes of this study will benefit both diachronically-oriented scholars who may have attributed too much heterogeneity to a text on the basis of its incohesion and those practicing more synchronic or holistic approaches whose justifiable commitment to attempting a holistic reading before considering compositional alternatives may have obscured tensions and developments that are genuinely present in the text.

Recent scholarship has become more open to approaches which pursue conceptual coherence regardless of literary or historical indicators of incohesion, raising the question whether those elements in fact merit the importance they have typically enjoyed. While small steps have been taken to bring these viewpoints into dialogue, much remains to be done.⁷¹ The present volume attempts to show that the synchronic-diachronic boundary is not merely permeable, but should be collapsed, and that identifying the varying levels of conceptual coherence in the books of the Twelve is a way to move beyond what is too often a synchronic-diachronic opposition.⁷²

70 See the helpful survey of this phenomenon in K. Cuffey, "Remnant, Redactor, and Biblical Theologian," 197–202. Nogalski's work, as Cuffey understands it (199–200), "begins with internal coherence and reasons to a coherence of perspective," and says little in favor of structural or thematic coherence.

71 See the exchange in Nogalski and Ben Zvi, *Two Sides of a Coin*, and the reflections of F. Landy on their interchange, "Three Sides of a Coin." I share the belief expressed some decades ago by L. Alonso Schökel that dialogue is not only desirable but necessary for the health of biblical studies; "Of Methods and Models," *Supplements to Vetus Testamentum* 36: *Congress Volume Salamanca 1983* (ed. J.A. Emerton; Leiden: Brill, 1985), 3–13.

72 Becker, "Was ist 'Kohärenz,'" 119, is also clear that the interaction between the diachronic evaluation of cohesion and the synchronic exploration of coherence is mutually beneficial: "Zum anderen ist es der neutestamentlichen Hermeneutik möglich, die Individualität des verstehenden Subjekts in ihrer Bedeutung für die Textauslegung zu berücksichtigen."

Finally, the book-by-book tracing of the theme of the nations in the Minor Prophets will advance understanding of the interrelation of these twelve compositions.⁷³ The ambiguous reasons behind the collection of the Twelve make such exploration a relevant research question, and a thematic approach will contribute something new, since heretofore the coherence of the Twelve has been argued primarily on lexical grounds.⁷⁴ Given its extent, it is also more detailed than have been the thematic treatments of the Twelve published to date.⁷⁵

Readers will quickly notice that while every chapter begins with a survey of the relevant terminology for non-Israelite entities and then explores their characteristics, the organization of the following section that analyzes those characteristics varies from book to book. While the general order of lexical followed by semantic overlap and/or distinction is followed consistently, the varied nature of the theme in each book sometimes favors a treatment that explores one or the other in more detail.

73 A. Schart, "Israel and the Nations in the Book of the Twelve Prophets: Some introductory remarks," paper presented at the annual meeting of the SBL, Atlanta, Georgia, 22 November 2010.

74 Note especially the ground-breaking work of Nogalski in *Literary Precursors to the Book of the Twelve* and *Redactional Processes in the Book of the Twelve*.

75 For example, P. Redditt, "The King in Haggai-Zechariah 1–8 and the Book of the Twelve," in *Tradition in Transition: Haggai and Zechariah 1–8 in the Trajectory of Hebrew Theology* (ed. M.J. Boda and M.H. Floyd; LHBOTS 475; London: T & T Clark, 2008), 56–82; Rendtorff, "How to Read the Book of the Twelve as a Theological Unity;" Zapff, "The Perspective on the Nations," and most of the contributions to Albertz, Nogalski, and Wöhrle (eds.), *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve*. LeCureux, *The Thematic Unity of the Book of the Twelve*, is a notable exception.

The Nations in Hosea

Particularly with respect to the various theories that advocate reading the Twelve as a literary whole, Hosea is a puzzling point of departure for the collection. It is the only book of the Twelve that includes no address whatsoever to the nations, and the nations-theme paradoxically removes the nations from the scene. To a significant extent this can be explained by Hosea's focus on Israel/Judah as the only and exclusive metaphorical spouse for YHWH and by the corresponding relegation of the nations to a secondary role. Despite the unusual way that Hosea treats the nations-theme, however, it can still be studied productively in the larger context of the Twelve.¹

2.1 Terminology

We begin with a survey of Hosea's terminology for non-Israelite entities. Unlike many other books in the Twelve, Hosea rarely speaks of the 'nations' with general terms for ethnic groups or states, preferring either proper nouns or oblique references to such groups via metaphor ('lovers') or metonymy ('the great king' [of Assyria]).

2.1.1 *Proper Nouns*

These include, first, Egypt and Assyria, nations to the southwest and northeast of Israel, respectively, whose historic importance for Israel was, at least by the eighth century, unsurpassed.² Egypt (2:15; 7:11; 8:13; 9:3, 6; 11:5, 11; 12:1[11:12], 9[12:8], 13[12:12]; 13:4; once the Egyptian city of Memphis, 9:6) and Assyria (5:13; 7:11; 8:9; 9:3; 10:6; 11:5, 11; 12:1[11:12]; 14:4[3]) usually occur together in Hosea, and in such contexts they are either a potential source of political/military aid or

1 Note especially H.M. Barstad, "Hosea and the Assyrians," in *Thus Speaks Ishtar of Arbela: Prophecy in Israel, Assyria, and Egypt in the Neo-Assyrian Period* (ed. R.P. Gordon and H.M. Barstad; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 91–110, which also deals with Hosea's references to Egypt.

2 Note the detailed survey of occurrences of Egypt and Assyria in F.I. Andersen and D.N. Freedman, *Hosea: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 24; Garden City: Doubleday, 1980), 469.

the place of Israel's future exile.³ When Egypt appears alone, it is usually in passages that refer to the exodus (2:15) or to the reversal of the exodus in exile (8:13), or to the place where YHWH's relationship with national Israel began (12:9[8], 13[12]; 13:4). Once Egypt by itself is the destination of Israel's future exile (9:6). When Assyria occurs by itself it is either the focus of contemporary Israel's political hopes (5:13; 8:9) or the unintended destination of a vassal payment in the form of a cult object (10:6).

The reference to the destruction of Beth-Arbel by Shalman in 10:14 continues to puzzle interpreters since Shalmaneser III, Shalmaneser V, and Salamanu king of Moab are among the possible referents.⁴ Historical distance from the book's eighth-century setting makes Shalmaneser III less likely than Shalmaneser V, and Salamanu's submission to Assyria makes it unlikely that one vassal would go marauding against another.⁵ But as Ben Zvi points out, the verse is not at all forthcoming if Shalmaneser V is indeed in view, and for our purposes we can simply conclude that a non-Israelite king destroyed an Israelite city in the Transjordan in a particularly violent and brutal fashion.

A few other obscure passages may refer to non-Israelite nations. While צר in 9:13 can be read as 'Tyre,' it is difficult to make sense of such a reference in context, and the mention of planting makes a botanical referent much more likely.⁶ A king (מלך ירב) appears twice (5:13; 10:6), both times in parallel with Assyria as the focus of Israel's hopes or tribute. While several interpretative options exist, the words should probably be read as the 'great king' (מלכי רב), and thus as a reference to Assyria's king.⁷

Finally, two locales are mentioned. Baal Peor is mentioned as the site at which Israel 'consecrated itself' to participation in Baal worship with the

3 Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 480, note that Hos 7:12–16; 8:9–13 both begin with a mention of Assyria and close with a mention of Egypt.

4 E. Ben Zvi, *Hosea* (FOTL XXIA/1; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 219.

5 "Salamanu of the land of Moab" appears in a list in one of Tiglath-Pileser III's royal inscriptions (K3751) of "newly subjugated western vassals and their tribute" covering the years 738, 734. See H. Tadmor and S. Yamada, *The Royal Inscriptions of Tiglath-Pileser III (744–727 BC), and Shalmaneser V (726–722 BC), Kings of Assyria* (RINAP 1; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 122 (text 48, rev. 7'–13').

6 See J.A. Dearman, *Hosea* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 250.

7 As BHS and J. Jeremias suggest (*Der Prophet Hosea* [ATD 24/1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983], 130), although A. Gelston, *The Twelve Minor Prophets* (BHQ 13; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2010), 60*, notes that both G and S confirm the word division presented in the Massoretic text. Barstad, "Hosea and the Assyrians," 107–110, cites some of the relevant literature and argues that the term refers to Jeroboam.

Moabites. Aram occurs once (12:12[11]) and figures merely as the geographic destination to which Jacob fled when his life was in danger (cf. Genesis 28).

2.1.2 גוי-Language, עַם-Language

As noted above, the usual language for non-Israelite groups is quite rare in Hosea, being limited to ‘peoples’ (עַמִּים, 7:8, with the definite article); ‘strangers’ (זָרִים, 7:9; note also the hypothetical use in 8:7); and ‘nations’ (גוֹיִם, 8:8, 10; 9:17; 10:10; always plural). In 7:8, the nations are the milieu (in the metaphor there, raw batter) in which Israel has mixed itself, but to no avail: the result is a failure. In 7:9, Israelite involvement with ‘strangers’ proves similarly counterproductive, as she loses her strength to them. The presentation of Israel in 8:8 is more negative still, since no potential political partners among the nations (בְּגוֹיִם) are even interested in Israel—this despite Israel’s attempts to hire allies from the nations (8:10). This trajectory reaches its low point in the final reference to ‘the nations’ in 10:10, where they become Israel’s enemy, used by YHWH to chastise his people.⁸ (In 9:1 the author attributes joy to the nations, but this is not relevant to our discussion.)

2.1.3 Generic Terms

There are a variety of generic references to non-Israelite states in Hosea. These terms describe them primarily in light of their relationship to Israel, whether positive or negative. There is one reference to the nations as the ‘enemy’ (8:3; cf. the ‘vulture’ in 8:1), and there is certainly a non-Israelite force behind the destruction of Samaria in 13:16 and the ‘sword’ in 11:6.

While Israel’s illicit lovers are usually other gods (e.g., ch. 2), the term ‘lovers’ (אַהֲבִים) sometimes describes the nations as the object of Israel’s pursuit (e.g., ‘nations’ is in parallel with ‘lovers’ in 8:9–10). This desire for alliances and support is probably linked to the reference to horses in 14:4[3], Egypt being the most likely source (Deut 17:16; 1 Kgs 10:28; 2 Chron 1:17; 9:28; Isa 31:1; Ezek 17:15).

2.2 Characteristics of the Nations

We are now in a position to explore the roles that the non-Israelite nations play in Hosea. The categories used below arise naturally enough out of the text’s

⁸ Pace Andersen and Freedman, *Hosea*, 566, it is unlikely that עַמִּים here refers to Israelite troops marshalled against Benjamin (they judge that a foreign referent is “possible”). J. Jeremias recognizes that internal strife was a reality in the past, but understands the reference to be to foreigners, *Der Prophet Hosea*, 134.

various pronouncements. Their order tries to capture the movement of the book from Israel's pristine origins, through various harmful interactions with the nations that Israel intentionally develops, to a future in which punishment through the nations' agency leads to Israel's ultimate rejection of dependence upon them in favor of complete dependence upon YHWH.⁹

2.2.1 *The Place or Time of Israel's Origins*

This use makes explicit reference to Egypt and Israel's liberation from slavery there, whether as the earliest point in Israel's national history (2:15) or as the point of departure for the exodus (12:13[12]). While Israel's relationship with YHWH began well and subsequently deteriorated (2:15), YHWH's commitment to Israel remains firm, and this bodes well for Israel despite the looming judgment. Twice YHWH affirms that he has been her God from the time of Egypt onward (12:9[8]; 13:4), and in the first case he promises to once again liberate her from oppression so that the Festival of Booths can be celebrated. The second reference also underlines YHWH's fidelity from the earliest times onward, but the remainder of chapter 13 describes the inevitable punishment that Israel must undergo before the final chapter considers the possibility of restoration after repentance.

2.2.2 *The Site or Source of Some of Israel's Religious Infidelity*

Hosea emphasizes the foreign origins of Israel's deviant religious practices. The reference to Baal Peor in 9:10 harks back to the events of Num 25:1–5, before Israel's entry into the land.¹⁰ Both Hosea's summary of the period and its presentation in Numbers 25 hold Israel almost exclusively responsible. The only time the Moabites are the subject of a verb is in Num 25:2, where they invited (Qal of קרא) the Israelites to participate in their sacrifices.¹¹ In Numbers 25, however, this single action is preceded by the summary introduction that Israel began to commit religious infidelity (זנה, cf. Hos 4:15; 5:3; 9:1), and is followed by three more verbs that describe various facets of illicit religious practice (eat, bow down, join oneself) and have Israel as their verbal subject, culminating

9 This is expressed succinctly in D. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah* (WBC 31; Waco: Word, 1987), 7–8, and in J. Jeremias, *Der Prophet Hosea*, 20–21. Dearman, *Hosea*, sees a similar development in the texts that he argues are the primary traditions with which the author of Hosea worked, 32–43, as does J. Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy in Israel* (rev. and enl. ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 87.

10 See Dearman, *Hosea*, 251–52, 372.

11 Moabite agency is completely absent from the story's recapitulation in Ps 106:28–29.

in Israel's 'joining themselves' (Niphal of צמד) to Baal of Peor in Num 25:3.¹² Hosea similarly makes Israel the subject of the only active verb (Niphal of גזר), with the result that they became as detestable as what they loved (Hos 9:10).

2.2.3 *Israel's Political Allies*

While Israel's political alliances with non-Israelite powers were consistently asymmetric, meaning she was never the dominant party, this does not seem to have rendered such ties undesirable from her side. On the contrary, Hosea often mentions the nations in the context of Israel's alliances with them (often instead of depending upon YHWH). In one case (5:13) Assyria is the object of two verbs of appeal by Israel. Once Assyria is mentioned together with other, unnamed nations as the political milieu in which Israel's diplomacy tries to operate (8:8–10, where Israel's amorous approach leads to her being disdained). Sometimes only anonymous groups appear (7:8–9) as partners whose strength Ephraim desires but who ironically devour his strength. Twice Egypt and Assyria appear together as the object of Israel's hopes for political survival: once in 7:11, where they are the object of two verbs of appeal, and again in 12:2[1], where they are the dominant party in alliance with Ephraim.

2.2.4 *Instrument or Setting of Israel's Future Punishment*

As the unanticipated reactions of the nations to Israel's political advances show, Israel's hope in other nations is tragically misplaced (5:13; 7:11). While in the past and present the nations are at best opportunistic and occasionally hostile (10:14), in the future their role will be exclusively negative. Violations of the Sinai covenant (8:1) mean that the enemy will pursue Israel like a vulture (8:1, 3; cf. Deut 28:22, 45),¹³ and various nations will attack her (10:10; 13:16) in a series of disciplinary judgments that ends with Israel being exiled, once generically (9:17) but characteristically to Egypt or Assyria (8:13; 9:6 [Egypt only]; 10:6 [Assyria only]; both together in 9:3; 11:5).¹⁴

12 See P.J. Budd, *Numbers* (WBC 25; Waco: Word, 1984), 279. W. Lee, *Punishment and Forgiveness in Israel's Migratory Campaign* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 173–74, notes that Num 25:1–5 focuses not on Israel's sexual behavior in itself, but on the "worship of and sacrifice to Moabite gods" to which it is connected.

13 D. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, 131.

14 If אָל (see BHS apparatus) is omitted, the imperfect is now first, so could be volitional: 'let him return!' In any case, the verse operates on the wordplay involving שׁוּב; Israel will (not) return to Egypt, (but) to Assyria, who will be her king (almost in YHWH's stead), because (the כִּי makes the causal relation explicit) she has refused to 'return' to YHWH.

It is notable that this is the most frequent use of nations-terminology in Hosea. Given the book's focus on producing genuine repentance (contrast 6:1–3 with chapter 14), this emphasis, achieved in part through a careful development of the nations-theme, should probably be understood as a rhetorical device to prompt a change in heart and behavior.¹⁵

2.2.5 *Rejected Source of Potential Help*

The suggestion that Hosea focuses on the nations especially as the means of judgment by which YHWH threatens Israel is verified by the radical shift in Israel's posture toward the nations as proposed in chapter 14. This is the only passage in the book that broaches this perspective, and it does so in terms that are urged upon Israel as a way to express her repentance.

With very few exceptions outside the narrative of chapters 1–3 (6:1–3; 8:2b; 9:14, 17; 10:3; 12:8[7]; 13:2; and the coda in 14:9[8]), the whole of Hosea is direct discourse addressed by Yahweh to unfaithful Israel.¹⁶ Still more striking is the rarity with which Israel addresses YHWH: this occurs only in 8:2 and perhaps in 13:2. This means that the speech proposed to Israel in chapter 14 is significant first due to its semantics, but also due to its nature as direct speech, the primary method of communication in the relationship between YHWH and his people. When Israel's speech to YHWH is presented for the last time (14:2–3[1–2]), she, in the words the author proposes to her, rejects Assyria as her potential deliverer and Egypt as the source of horses and thus of military might. These alliances are rejected as tantamount to idolatry (14:3c[2c]), making Israel entirely dependent upon YHWH and so bringing Israel's relationship with him back to its pristine condition.¹⁷ Once repentant and delivered, Israel will find herself once again in the wilderness with no mixed allegiances and with intimate knowledge of YHWH (2:16–23), while the nations are nowhere to be seen.

15 See M.S. Odell, "The Prophets and the End of Hosea," in *Forming Prophetic Literature* (ed. J.W. Watts and P.R. House; JSOTSup 235; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 158–70, esp. 165–66.

16 See S.A. Meier, *Speaking of Speaking: Marking Direct Discourse in the Hebrew Bible* (VTSup 46; Leiden: Brill, 1992); D.J.A. Clines, *I, He, We, and They: A Literary Approach to Isaiah 53* (JSOTSup 1; Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1976); G. Goldenberg, "On Direct Speech and the Hebrew Bible," in *Studies in Hebrew and Aramaic Syntax* (ed. K. Jongeling et al.; Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics 17; Leiden: Brill, 1991), 79–96.

17 As Andersen and Freedman put it (*Hosea*, 645), "[I]n repentance alien gods and alien overlords are renounced."

2.3 Analysis

2.3.1 *Lexical Overlap and/or Distinction between Israel/Judah and the Nations*

While in Hosea Israel is clearly intermingling with the nations, the lexical data present the two groups as completely distinct. Whether in captivity in Egypt long ago, or as part of the Assyrian empire now, and even in exile later, Israel remains lexically distinguishable from all other people groups.

2.3.2 *Semantic Overlap and/or Distinction between Israel/Judah and the Nations*

As we have seen, the nature of Israel's activity on the international scene is highly objectionable to the author of Hosea (7:8).¹⁸ Her dependence upon the nations has already weakened her (7:9), and still she persists in this rejection of YHWH in favor of earthly powers. While Israel remains lexically distinct from these other nations, the nature of her alliances is far too intimate to escape the author's condemnation. Politically she has made alliances (12:2[1]), and such alliances inevitably have a religious facet. Hence the author describes them as solicitation of a prostitute (8:9). Israel's failure to depend on YHWH means that she has found security in ways that compromise her subjection to YHWH's will and discipline (7:10).

This situation jeopardizes Israel's very existence, as is evident in the opening chapter's presentation of the children of Hosea and Gomer: 'Jezreel,' 'No Mercy,' and most clearly 'Not My People.' The declaration that Israel has lost her status as YHWH's people (1:9) is tantamount to making her part of the nations. It is only the future restoration of Israel that prevents God's chosen people from blinking out of existence and brings about her remarriage to him (2:19–20, 23).¹⁹ The binary nature of the monogamous marriage relationship (i.e., one is married to another or not) means that the concept of being YHWH's people in Hosea is best understood in a similarly binary way.

This binary reality puts Israel in a precarious position, which seems to be intentional on the part of the author. Israel is defined by her relationship with YHWH, and has been so from the earliest point in her history, as YHWH

18 Here and throughout I use 'author' merely to lighten the style, and do not imply or assume the text's literary unity.

19 J.D.W. Watts underlines the importance of God's love for Israel in Hosea (and Malachi) in his "A Frame for the Book of the Twelve: Hosea 1–3 and Malachi," in *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve* (ed. J.D. Nogalski and M.A. Sweeney; SBL Symposium 15; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 209–17.

reminds her (12:9[8]; 13:4). As such Israel is distinct from the nations, yet her dependence upon them instead of upon YHWH ironically threatens to eliminate the difference so essential to her identity. The way forward for Israel is thus the rejection of the nations (and their gods) in favor of a definitive and exclusive relationship with YHWH.

2.4 Conclusions

Despite the fact that Hosea is the only book in the Twelve that contains no oracle against the nations, the theme of the nations is essential to the book's message. The call to return to YHWH can be heeded only if Israel puts a full end to her relationships with foreign nations.²⁰ At the same time, the theme is essentially static: the nations never change, they are never shown to be doomed to judgment (or invited to participate in deliverance), and they should be summarily dismissed by repentant Israel as attractive but unfaithful partners. The monochromatic nature of the nations theme in Hosea is especially striking in light of the book's comprehensive chronological horizon. In the past, in the present, and especially in the future, the nations cannot bring Israel any good, and threaten to undo what is essential to her identity, her exclusive dependence upon YHWH.

The questions the theme raises in Hosea therefore touch not the coherence of the theme in the book itself, but the relation of Hosea's material on the nations to negative and especially to positive treatments of the nations elsewhere in the Twelve and throughout the HB/OT.²¹ Within the Twelve only Joel and perhaps Habakkuk have a comparably negative perspective on the

20 Ben Zvi, *Hosea*, 295–96; similarly R. Rendtorff, *The Canonical Hebrew Bible: A Theology of the Old Testament* (Tools for Biblical Study 7; trans. D. Orton; Leiden: Deo, 2005), 274–75.

21 Two notable references outside the Twelve are Gen 12:1–3 and Exod 19:5–6, both of which clearly place Israel in relation to the nations for their good. On Gen 12:1–3, see E.J. Schnabel, “Israel, The People of God, and the Nations,” *JETS* 45 (2002): 35–57 and more broadly J. Levenson, “The Universal Horizon of Biblical Particularism,” in *Ethnicity and the Bible* (ed. M. Brett; BIS 19; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 143–69. On Exod 19:5–6, see in detail J.A. Davies, *A Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19:6* (JSOTSup 395; London: T & T Clark, 2004); J.B. Wells, *God's Holy People: A Theme in Biblical Theology* (JSOTSup 305; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000); G. Barbiero, “Mamleket Kohanim (Es 19,6a)—I sacerdoti al potere?” *RivB* 37 (1989): 427–45; G. Steins, “Priesterherrschaft, Volk von Priester oder was sonst? Zur Interpretation von Ex 19,6,” *BZ* 45 (2001): 20–36; and more generally, S.E. Balentine, *The Torah's Vision of Worship* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 79–176.

nations as a group. If Hosea and Amos were at some point on the same scroll, as A. Schart suggests on the basis of their superscriptions and other features, their different perspectives on the nations would surely have been striking to their early readers.²² As the theme unfolds across the rest of the Twelve, significant dynamics will appear, and will require us to consider them in relation to the theme's chronological and literary anchor in Hosea.

22 See A. Schart, *Die Entstehung des Zwölfprophetenbuchs: Neubearbeitungen von Amos im Rahmen schriftenerübergreifender Redaktionprozesse* (BZAW 260; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1998), 133–50.

The Nations in Joel

If Hosea can be said to envision Israel's future while largely disregarding the destinies of the nations, Joel could hardly be more different. The book's last chapter is consecrated entirely to the vindication of YHWH's people through the destruction and shame of the nations who have long oppressed her: her consummation comes about through the destruction of the other.¹ But the contrast between the two books is not absolute: while almost certainly set several centuries later than Hosea, Joel often seems to share Hosea's disinterest in the theological dictum that Israel exists in part for the good of some within the nations around her.

3.1 Terminology

3.1.1 *Proper Nouns*

A number of proper nouns designate the nations in Joel, although they appear only in the closing section of the book. These terms refer respectively to people groups (Sabeans), city-states (Tyre, Sidon), states (Edom), empires (Egypt), or geographic areas (the regions of Philistia). Tyre (4:4), Sidon (4:4), and 'all the regions of Philistia' (4:4) are said to have taken YHWH's silver and gold and to have sold Judahites into slavery, while the Sabeans (4:8) are the final destination of other nations whom Judah will herself sell into slavery. Egypt and Edom (both in 4:19) will be destroyed for violence against Judah.

3.1.2 *גוי-Language, עם-Language, and Related Terms*

גוי-language is used exclusively for non-Israelite entities. The plural גוים (in parallel with עמים) is used for non-Israelite groups who would normally reproach Israel (2:17, 19) and throughout chapter 4 to refer to YHWH's enemies who have abused Israel and against whom he therefore fights (4:2, 9, 11, 12, sometimes as כלי-הגוים מסביב). There does not seem to be any distinction between כלי-הגוים and הגוים in chapter 4. The singular גוי is used metaphorically of the locusts in 1:6 and literally of a distant nation, perhaps the Sabeans, in 4:8.

1 This is also noted by M. Roth, *Israel und die Völker im Zwölfprophetenbuch: Eine Untersuchung zu den Büchern Joel, Jona, Micha und Nahum* (FRLANT 210; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 56, 71–72, 83.

Joel's use of עַם-language is very flexible. The singular עַם can refer to Judahites (2:16, in parallel with קהל; 2:17, 18, 19, 26, 27; 4:2, 3, 16, all with a pronominal suffix referring to YHWH), or to the unidentified army that will attack various peoples in the Day of YHWH (2:2, 5). The plural form עַמִּים is often used for non-Israelite nations (2:6; 2:17, in parallel with גִּוִּים), but also occurs in 2:6 where it refers to various peoples threatened by YHWH's army, a group which could surely include Israelites. Joel uses זר once (4:17) in a statement that excludes such persons from the eschatologically restored Jerusalem.

3.1.3 *Generic Terms*

The 'northerner' inevitably provokes arguments among exegetes in favor of a locust-referent or a military referent (2:20 only). Although it is not impossible that the expression should refer to locusts, the evidence seems to point toward an anonymous invading army of human beings whose identity will be discussed below. 'All flesh' in 3:1[2:28] is an interpretative crux that refers either to Judahites of all classes, or to all classes of humanity. It too will be discussed in detail below, in relation to 'whoever' in 3:5[2:32].

3.2 *Characteristics of the Nations*

The nations have both active and passive roles in Joel. They never appear independently, but are always in relation to the God of Israel and his people.

3.2.1 *The Means of Israel's Punishment*

The nations' first active role is as the means of the Yehudites' punishment, and in this role they are exceptionally led by Yahweh himself (2:1–11; 17). While Joel 1 most likely describes a plague of literal locusts, it is quite probable that the 'people' of chapter 2 constitute a literal, human army. Not only are most of the characteristics mentioned there best suited to a human army, but some of the imagery (e.g., defense with weapons, 2:8) becomes unintelligible if locusts are in view there. Furthermore, since chapter 2 stresses that the Day of YHWH is far worse than anything the audience has ever known (2:2, including the locusts of chapter 1), limiting the referent of chapter 2 to locusts would undermine the superlative comparison. The human army of chapter 2 clearly threatens the whole land and the people (as well as other nations) with complete destruction (2:3). The army is terrifyingly well organized (2:7–8), fearless, and is presented in eschatological terms (2:10).

The representation of the nations in this capacity seems, at first glance, to preclude their condemnation in their role as the instrument of YHWH's

punishment of his people. While the subsequent call to the Yehudites to repent (2:12–17) adds in 2:17 that the army's invasion will result in Yehud's reproach and subjugation (למשל-יבם)² and in YHWH's dishonor, both the domination of Yehud and YHWH's dishonor are directly connected to the 'nations' and the 'peoples' as those who witness this army's violence against Yehud rather than to the army itself. The nations' failure to understand YHWH's disciplinary actions against his people is thus an implicit critique of the nations.

However, the invading army comes under explicit condemnation in 2:20, where YHWH says he will destroy it because (כי) it 'has done great things' or 'has made itself great'. Even though it is YHWH's army, its instrumental role does not free it of all moral accountability. The offense of the northern army is having 'made itself great,' a very flexible phrase that is also used to characterize YHWH's deliverance in the following verse. When applied to non-Israelite armies, uses of Hifil גדל without an object and with a human subject consistently entail presumptive self-exaltation and boasting. A scenario in which "the boasting of this enemy is mentioned in order to substantiate the announced judgment" fits the Joel context perfectly, and so describes the condemnation and destruction an anonymous group drawn from a nation or nations outside Israel.³

3.2.2 *Those Who Attribute Shame to YHWH's People*

As just noted, once the unnamed army has swept through Yehud, the nations are also presented as those who attribute shame to YHWH's people because of his treatment of them (2:18–27), affirming that the petition of 2:17 was well motivated. Crenshaw's observation that "the decisive turning point in the book is reached with this impersonal questioning of YHWH's actions [in 2:17]" highlights YHWH's decision to act not only for his people's honor, but for his own as well.⁴ While the primary emphasis in this section is on the end of his people's

2 While S. Romerowski, *Les livres de Joël et d'Abdias* (CEB; Vaux-sur-Seine: Edifac, 1989), 114, and J. Barton, *Joel and Obadiah* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 82–83, argue that the consistent focus in 2:19, 26, 27, on shame and disgrace rather than dominion makes the proverbial sense of משל preferable here, this lets concerns for symmetry with the context override grammar and fails to perceive the connection between shame and dominion by foreign powers. The forty or so occurrences of the syntagm משל with ב do not indicate shame (e.g., Gen 3:16; 4:17; Ps 66:7 is the only exception, and uses the preposition to mark an adjective).

3 R. Mosis, J. Bergman and H. Ringren, "גדל," *TDOT* 2:390–416 (404–406).

4 J.L. Crenshaw, *Joel: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 24C; New York: Doubleday, 1995), 143. The nations' characterization here is fully coherent with their presentation in chapter 4, pace J. Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen des Zwölfpfphetenbuchs*.

‘reproach’ (חֲרָפָה, 2:19) and ‘shame’ (בוֹשׁ, 2:26, 27) among the nations, the coming deliverance also demonstrates that YHWH remains committed to and present with his people (2:27), and so shows him to be innocent of the charge of abandoning them.

3.2.3 *The Northerner*

Before moving on, we must consider the identity of the ‘northerner’ (צַפּוֹנִי, 2:20, only here beside the eponymous family in Num 26:15). While some think that locusts are again in view, many argue that although it is not impossible that a horde of locusts would come from the north, this was rarely the case. Therefore, as Crenshaw explains, the phenomenon “would hardly have provided an adequate linguistic basis for what appears to be a fixed expression.”⁵ Crenshaw himself thinks locusts are in view for another reason, their association with YHWH’s invading army. The term would thus function “as a play on a prophetic symbol for the ultimate adversary.”⁶

However, when the ‘north’ (צָפוֹן) appears elsewhere in Israelite prophetic literature (among scores of examples, Isa 14:31; 41:25; 43:6; Jer 1:13–15; 3:18; 4:6; 6:1, 22–23; 10:22; Ezek 23:24; 26:7; 38:6, 15; 39:2), it invariably refers to a human enemy or state.⁷ This is also true of the few references in the Twelve that are not simply directional (Zeph 2:13; Zech 2:6; perhaps Zech 6:6, 8). Furthermore, a comparison between YHWH’s mighty deeds or self-exaltation and the same in relation to a human army (2:20, 21) is easily understood in light of the human pride and arrogance that characterize such behavior, but nearly meaningless if YHWH’s actions are contrasted with those of an insentient swarm of locusts. Even apart from these considerations, it is hardly self-evident that the locusts of 2:25 are the explicit identification of one and the same army in view throughout 2:18–27.⁸ On the contrary, it is quite possible that Joel refers both to an invasion by locusts (chapter 1) and to a literal military invasion (chapter 2), and that 2:20, 25 refer respectively to the one and to the other. It is thus best to identify the northerner with the invading army described early in chapter 2.

Entstehung und Komposition (BZAW 360; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 431, who argues that chapter 4 introduces something quite different.

5 Crenshaw, *Joel*, 151.

6 Crenshaw, *Joel*, 151.

7 This point is also made by D. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel* (NAC 19A; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 354.

8 Pace Romerowski, *Les livres de Joël et d'Abdias*, 121; similarly L. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 88.

3.2.4 Recipients of YHWH's Spirit?

The possibility that some among the nations would become recipients of YHWH's spirit arises from the promise of 3:1[2:28] that YHWH will pour out his רוּחַ on 'all flesh' (כָּל בָּשָׂר). Interpreters are divided over the scope of this term, some favoring all Israel, others favoring all humanity. Barton, following Hulst's 1958 study, asserts that "all other uses of the phrase 'all flesh' refer either to "all human beings' or 'all living beings.'"⁹ Contrariwise, E. Moore claims that there are cases in which the phrase's referent is restricted to part of humanity (Isa 66:16; Jer 25:31).¹⁰ Jer 25:30–33 uses a number of parallel expressions (all the inhabitants of the land/earth, the end of the earth, the nations, all flesh, from nation to nation, from the remotest parts of the earth) to describe the unlimited scope of a work of judgment that nonetheless focuses on "the wicked" (25:31d). While these expressions are therefore not absolutely comprehensive (i.e., inclusive of every human being in the domains mentioned), it is very difficult to see how any of these expressions, with the possible exception of the initial "all those who dwell in the land," could have a limited scope.¹¹ The same is likely the case in Isa 66:16; S. Paul notes that the phrase has a generally comprehensive scope elsewhere in Isaiah (40:5, 6; 49:26; 66:23, 24),¹² and J.D.W. Watts notes the contrast between this universal scope and those whom the judgment will destroy. While the following references to 'your' sons, daughters, old men, and young men naturally limit themselves to Joel's Yehudite audience, it is unnecessary to see them as incompatible with the broader scope of 3:1a, which is consistent with the generic category of "everyone who calls on YHWH's name" in 3:5.¹³

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- 9 Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, 96, with reference to A.R. Hulst, "Kol basar in der priesterlichen Flutzerzählung," in *Studies on the Book of Genesis* (ed. B. Gemser and J. Hoftijzer; OTS 12; Leiden: Brill, 1958), 28–66.
 - 10 E. Moore, "Joel's Promise of the Spirit," in *Presence, Power, and Promise: The Role of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament* (ed. D.G. Firth and P.D. Wegner; Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011), 245–56 (250).
 - 11 Cf. P.C. Craigie, P.H. Kelley, and J.F. Drinkard, Jr., *Jeremiah 1–25* (WBC 26; Dallas: Word, 1991), 374–75; L. Allen, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 291–92, favors seeing even the first term as referring in a generally comprehensive way to all humanity.
 - 12 S. Paul, *Isaiah 40–66: Translation and Commentary* (Eerdmans Critical Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 624; J.D. Watts, *Isaiah 34–66* (WBC 25; Waco: Word, 1987), 364; so also J. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 685, who notes its relation to the universal judgment announced in Matt 24:22.
 - 13 So also Romerowski, *Les livres de Joël et d'Abdias*, 145–46. Crenshaw's restriction of the referents of 3:1, 5 to Israelites imposes on these texts the distinct senses and referents of

Assigning a generally comprehensive referent to the phrase 'all flesh' has significant consequences for the nations-theme in Joel, especially because it stands in tension with the presentation of the nations which, at least as גוים and עמים, are consistently in opposition to YHWH elsewhere in the book. Apart from this and two other passages (3:5; 4:17), non-Israelites in Joel act, or are foreseen as acting, in ways that directly oppose them to YHWH. In order for coherence to be preserved, it must be assumed that 'all flesh' has not only a referent distinct from (although overlapping with) the nations, but that this referent is qualitatively different from the nations. In other words, it must be assumed (an interpretative choice, to be sure) that those upon whom YHWH pours out his spirit reckon seriously with YHWH's threats, regret their actions against his people, and so survive his judgment against them. That this is not interpretative sophistry appears from the fact that Joel makes a similar distinction within Israel, since an inner-Judah distinction is suggested by the calls to repentance earlier in the book, and such a distinction is made explicit in the restriction of the promised deliverance to 'those who call on YHWH' within the 'remnant' that YHWH calls (3:5).¹⁴

3.2.5 *YHWH's Eschatological Opponents*

Because of the 'afterward' in 3:1, it seems necessary to set the events of 3:1–4:21 in a context later than that in which Joel's initial audience found itself.¹⁵ This later context is characterized above all by YHWH's final intervention that completely destroys the nations who are opposed to him and brings his people's relation with him to a new summit on Mount Zion itself.

This perspectival shift is helpful as we trace what has been, until now, a rather amorphous presentation of the nations in Joel. Chapter 4 attributes numerous crimes and offenses to the nations, committed against either Yehud as a people group or against its territory (which ultimately belongs to YHWH). They have scattered YHWH's people, divided his land, cast lots for his people, and sold his people (including children) for frivolities (4:2–3, 6). They have also

Num 11:29; Jer 31:33–34; Ezek 39:29, but without arguments for doing so, *Joel*, 164–65. The generic, implicitly inclusive scope that he recognizes in 3:5 goes unexplored (*Joel*, 169). The coherence of Joel 3:1–5, and thus the relevance of 3:1 for understanding the referent of 3:5 and vice versa, is affirmed by R. Troxel, "Confirming Coherence in Joel 3 with Cognitive Grammar," *ZAW* 125 (2013): 578–92.

14 While thematic complexity need not entail thematic incoherence, a more blunt solution to the problem is to conclude that this element is secondary to Joel, as does Barton, *Joel*, 96.

15 See W.S. Prinsloo, *The Theology of the Book of Joel* (BZAW 163; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1985), 80; H.W. Wolff, *Joel and Amos* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 65.

taken YHWH's gold, silver, and temple utensils for their own (4:5). All these actions are summarized as a 'great evil' (רבה רעה) in 4:13.

Alongside this new focus, some secondary emphases have disappeared (Judah's shame) and new ones have appeared (Judah's purification, protection, and prosperity, 4:16–18, 20–21). Whatever the relationship between the non-Israelite groups mentioned here and the anonymous army of chapter 2, it is clear that Joel presents this final battle as the resolution of all injustices, even of those committed in the past.

The emphasis on YHWH's covenanted relation with his people and his ownership of their land is the first explicit reason for his punitive judgment of the nations, and is established by pronominal suffixes on various items in 4:2–5. At the same time, YHWH's ownership of his people and their land means that the nations' actions against them ultimately involve YHWH.¹⁶ The confrontation between the God of Israel and the nations is therefore further developed under the images of retaliation and recompense in 4:4–8.

The first element in this direct, *quid pro quo* recompense appears in 4:4, which seems to suggest sarcastically that the nations think their actions are justified. Whatever their reason for taking up arms against Yahweh and his people in the past, he finds them guilty of wrongdoing and promises to repay them commensurately. The justice of the divine recompense is detailed in the following verses, and is essentially *lex talionis*.¹⁷ YHWH's recompense in 4:7–8 focuses on the sale of Judahites into slavery, bypassing the gold, silver, and temple hardware mentioned in 4:5. The conquerors become the conquered, and those who sold Judeans as slaves will themselves be sold as slaves, ironically by the liberated Judeans.

From 4:9 onward, all proper nouns for non-Israelite nations are left behind until the description of eschatological consummation in 4:19.¹⁸ The nations

¹⁶ Roth, *Israel und die Völker*, 74–75, also notes the sharp contrast between the two groups.

¹⁷ Given the highly selective nature of historiography and literature in general, it is not problematic that the wrongs that Joel attributes to these groups are not attested elsewhere.

¹⁸ M. Sweeney notes that the Day of YHWH motif here “appears to define the use in Joel 4:9–21 of the tradition concerning King Jehoshaphat’s defeat of the Moabites, Ammonites, Meunites, and Edomites from 2 Chronicles 20.... the text in Joel initially renders the nations anonymous so that the scenario may be applied once again to any situation of threat against Jerusalem.” Sweeney, “The Place and Function of Joel in the Book of the Twelve,” in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve* (ed. P.L. Redditt and A. Scharf; BZAW 325; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 133–54 (146). This explanation of some passages’ preference for universal language is preferable (in large part because of its simplicity) to J. Wöhrle’s arbitrary suggestion, *Der Abschluss des Zwölfprophetenbuchs: Buchübergreifende Redaktionsprozesse in den späten Sammlungen* (BZAW 389; Berlin: de

as a generic category remain in view, however, whether pronominally in the elaborate challenge to prepare for war by turning their tools into weapons and then to confront YHWH in battle (4:9–10), or as the locus of the evil that will meet with judgment (4:13), or in more common terms like ‘(all the surrounding) nations’ in 4:11, 12, or the ‘multitudes’ who come to the valley YHWH-will-judge for battle in response to the challenge just issued (4:14).

This global perspective includes strong juridical and eschatological elements. The juridical aspect that was evident in the charges laid against these nations earlier in chapter 4 continues in YHWH’s announcement that he will sit in judgment over all the nations (4:12b), the assumption that evil merits judgment (4:13), and even the location of the battle itself, the valley of YHWH-will-judge. The eschatological aspect of the confrontation appears in the divine command (4:13, apparently to an angelic agent) to harvest the nations, in the term ‘Day of YHWH,’ and in the imagery of 4:15 (cf. 2:10). The outcome of YHWH’s combat against the nations is inevitably their defeat, even though this is never articulated in so many words. Rather, the images of YHWH as judge against nations who have committed great evil, of an eschatological harvest, and of YHWH as the lion whose roar shakes heaven and earth express the complete devastation and elimination of his enemies.

With YHWH’s roar (4:16), the passage seems to move beyond the eschatological destruction of the nations to a positive outcome described in terms of Jerusalem’s security and purity (4:17, 20), the land’s fecundity (4:18, in contrast to the desolation which will define Egypt and Edom, 4:19), and the avenging of Judah’s blood/shed (4:21).¹⁹ Despite the destruction of the nations in the valley of YHWH-will-judge, they figure (albeit by their absence) in each of these three descriptions.

First, Jerusalem’s now-permanent holiness is in parallel with the permanent absence of ‘strangers’ from it. This is the only time that Joel uses נָכַר-language (cf. Obad 11; Hos 7:9; 8:7, where in all three cases it refers to ethnic non-Israelites;

Gruyter, 2008), 191, that distinguishes “einer umfassenden buchübergreifenden Redaktion des Zwölfprophetenbuchs” solely on the shift from universal judgments against the nations as a generic group to judgments on particular nations.

19 The relationship between Joel 4:16 and Amos 1:2 is well known, but our focus on semantic rather than lexical intertextuality dictates that it be approached on that level. The differences between the local, limited destruction the phrase introduces in Amos 1–2 and the Day of YHWH here suggests that the link does not entail complete semantic identity. See further M. Beck, *Der “Tag YHWHs” im Dodekapropheten: Studien im Spannungsfeld von Traditions- und Redaktionsgeschichte* (BZAW 356; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 197–99, and Sweeney, “The Place and Function of Joel,” who correctly locates the Day of YHWH in Amos 5:18–20.

Hos 5:7 uses it of illegitimate children born to Israelites). While Barton terms the attitude expressed in Joel 4:17 “xenophobia,” this overlooks the primacy of moral and religious elements in Joel’s characterization of the non-Israelite nations, who are never condemned for being ethnically other.²⁰ In this connection it is important that Joel hardly thinks his Judahite audience is without sin, as chapters 1–2 make clear, and he nowhere doubts that YHWH has acted justly in punishing their sins. The term ‘strangers’ can therefore be seen here as referring to non-Israelites who, because of their resolute opposition to YHWH, are definitively excluded from the deliverance he will bring to his people.²¹ This religious explanation for their exclusion is confirmed by the term עֲבָר, which most likely refers to their passing through the city as invaders.²² This subtle qualification is one of only a few times that Joel mentions the possibility of some distinction within the non-Israelite nations on the basis of a religious relationship to YHWH (cf. 3:1, 5). While it is important for the coherence of the nations-theme in Joel that Israel and the nations remain distinct, it is arguably still more important that the author preserve the clear distinction between those who repent and those who do not. As noted above, a primary goal of the book is to produce a similar distinction within Israel on the basis of repentance (2:12–14). The possibility that some among the nations should repent therefore adds significant complexity to the nations-theme in Joel but does not render it incoherent for that reason.

Second, the future fruitfulness of the land of Israel, especially its being well-watered, is contrasted with the devastated wilderness that stands in apposition with Egypt and Edom. The images of abundant water that describe Judah and Jerusalem are drawn from Gen 2:10 and Ezek 47:1–12. Joel uses the same verbs as Gen 2:10 (יָצַא and שָׁקַח), while the image of water flowing from the temple is identical to that of Ezekiel 47. While some assert that “The temple’s fountain becomes the river of life to bring fertility to the earth,”²³ the effects of this renewal extend beyond the land of Israel only if the Wadi Shittim is in Moabite

20 Barton, *Joel and Obadiah*, 108.

21 While it is necessary to recognize that otherness as a ground for exclusion from restored Jerusalem is distinct from the guilt attributed to the nations earlier in the chapter, Roth’s conclusion that they are not comparable (*Israel und die Völker*, 82) makes this difference much more important than it is.

22 D. Stuart, *Hosea–Jonah* (WBC 31; Waco: Word, 1987), 270, speaks of the exclusion of “foreign invaders.” Crenshaw, *Joel*, 198, renders it with “everyone outside the religious community who worships YHWH,” but puzzlingly goes on to speak of “excluding foreigners from the city” and comparing such a posture, much less religious than ethnic, to that of Ezra and Nehemiah.

23 J. Strazichic, *Joel’s Use of Scripture and Scripture’s Use of Joel* (BIS 82; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 243.

territory (3:19; cf. Num 25:1; 33:49), and that cannot be known with certainty.²⁴ Crenshaw sensibly rules out the Shittim of Num 25:1; 33:49; Josh 2:1; 3:1, since it would require the river described here to flow *across* the Jordan to the east, and suggests instead a figurative sense in which “even the thirstiest valley will have living water.”²⁵ Romerowski sees in the link between acacia and tabernacle furniture a link between the ‘valley of acacias’ and the purifying effect of the river flowing from the temple, with the stream affecting “the countryside around the capital city.”²⁶

Whether a literal wadi is in view or not, the possibility that the stream from the Jerusalem temple would reach the territory of the nations is the most remote of the interpretative possibilities here. Indeed, at least in the case of Egypt and Edom, it is clearly excluded, since they remain desolate.²⁷ In sum, water imagery, focused on the temple, is simply another means of expressing the binary, mutually exclusive relationship that exists between Israel’s God and those who oppose him, while representing the consummation of YHWH’s life-giving relationship with his repentant and restored people.

The third and final description of restored Judah’s well-being is more complex, and its very textual basis is debated (4:21a). BHS and BHQ read וְנִקִּיתִי דָמָם (4:21a), attested by 4QXII^c and the Vulgate. The LXX, followed by the Syriac, uses two different verbs ἐκδικήσω . . . ἀθωώσω, and could be translating either נִקְמָתִי (since retribution is bound up with ἀθωώσω) or נִקִּיתִי.²⁸ Because the textual basis for נָקָם is slim, we will pursue an interpretation based on the text as transmitted by L in BHS and BHQ.

The lexical sense of נָקָה in the Piel is clearly ‘to acquit.’²⁹ The syntax and nominal referent of the clause in 4:21 are easily understood. In terms of syntax,

24 Strazicich, *Joel’s Use of Scripture*, 243–45, notes that Joel has already used the concept ‘valley’ (with different terms, however) symbolically, which may incline the reader toward the “midrashic” sense of Moabite territory.

25 Crenshaw, *Joel*, 200.

26 Romerowski, *Les livre de Joël et d’Abdias*, 194, my translation.

27 Although Egypt and Edom “represent Israel’s historical enemies,” (Strazicich, *Joel’s Use of Scripture*, 245), their characterization in Joel as YHWH’s enemies, refractory and unrepentant, is important in relativizing ethnicity as the criterion of judgment.

28 A. Gelston, *The Twelve Minor Prophets* (BHQ 13; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2010), 78*, doubts that any *Vorlage* attested something other than נָקָה. LXX translates נָקָה (2×) consistently with ἐκδικέω in Zech 5:3, but given the uneven nature of the LXX any conclusion is perilous. Note also Deut 32:43.

29 The verb is non-cultic, appearing nowhere in Leviticus, while most of its occurrences are in books or contexts with a Deuteronomian penchant; J.P.J. Olivier, “נָקָה,” *NIDOTTE* 3:152–54; C. van Leeuwen, “נָקָה,” *TLOT* 2:763–67 (766); G. Warmuth, “נָקָה,” *TDOT* 9:553–63 (556).

it is almost unavoidable to understand a ‘which’ between the two verbs, since if the cognate verbs do not imply that there is a contrast the clause is blatantly self-contradictory: ‘I acquit their blood, I will not acquit (their blood).’ The 3mp pronominal suffix almost certainly refers to the blood/shed of Judah and Jerusalem for several reasons: (1) they are the nearest antecedents, appearing both in 4:19b and 4:20; (2) 4:21 begins with a *waw* that connects it to 4:20 syntactically; (3) the flow of thought in the passage has moved from the nations’ destruction to Judah’s consummation (4:19–20); and (4) the logical connection between the acquittal of this blood in 4:21a and YHWH’s residence in Zion in 4:21b.³⁰

Joel 4:21 appears to state that while the nations will be destroyed and deprived of God’s presence, his repentant people will enjoy his presence in connection with the acquittal of their blood/shed. But since Egypt and Edom have shed Judah’s innocent blood (4:19), what relevance does Judah’s blood/shed have for this pericope? Romerowski understands this acquittal in relation to Judah’s blood as spilt by Edom and Egypt in 4:19, but this seems impossible, since it would mean acquitting the two nations who (emphatically) embody incorrigible antipathy to YHWH and his people and who, per 4:19, will remain desolate.³¹ Garrett argues that bloodguilt or bloodshed is uniquely referred to by the plural of דם, but this is not the case (cf. Lev 17:4; Deut 21:8).³²

Given the rarity of the collocation דם נקה, it is possible that נקה here completes the echo of Exod 34:7 begun in Joel 2:13.³³ There the author cited several key elements from Exod 34:6 in connection with the call to Judah to repent, and as similar references assert, deliverance from punishment is always tied to repentance. Exod 34:7 and other passages with the Piel (Num 14:18; Jer 30:11;

30 Barton recognizes this possibility, *Joel and Obadiah*, 109–110.

31 “I will acquit those whose blood was spilt and whom I have not yet acquitted.” Romerowski, *Les livre de Joël et d’Abdias*, 198, my translation. Similarly C.A. Keller, “Joël,” in E. Jacob, C.A. Keller, and S. Amsler, *Osée, Joël, Amos, Abdias, Jonas* (CAT XIa; 2nd ed.; Geneva: Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1992), 155, but with almost no explanation.

32 Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, 396 n. 54.

33 J. Wöhrle sees the presence of Exod 34:6–7 as evidence of a redactional level in the Twelve (*Abschluss*, 11, 434, 466), while R. Scoralick, *Gottes Güte und Gottes Zorn: die Gottesprädikationen in Exodus 34,6f und ihre intertextuellen Beziehungen zum Zwölfprophetenbuch* (HBS 33; Freiburg: Herder, 2002), understands it as a key dialectic upon which (in part) the prophetic literature developed.

46:28), like several with the Niphal³⁴ (Jer 25:29; 49:12), use repetition of the root נקה in an infinitive absolute-imperfect verb pair, although their syntax varies. The verbs of Joel 4:21, of course, are not infinitives, as is also the case in Exod 20:7; Deut 5:11 (both with the negated imperfect). In all cases, regardless of verbal form and syntax, the object of נקה is the one who is acquitted, not the fault.³⁵ This means that Joel 4:21a must have as its verbal object those who were guilty of bloodshed, since acquitting one's blood apart from guilt is meaningless. A very similar idea, with an identical emphasis on divine presence, occurs in Isa 4:4–5.

But why introduce here, at the end of the book, Judah's bloodshed as a sin that must be acquitted? The only other Judahite sin mentioned in Joel is the absence of holistic repentance (Joel 2:12–13), so such a mention is at least unexpected.³⁶ The possible allusion to Exod 34:7 mentioned above, although differing in syntax and radically different in sense, may account for the interrelation of these two passages in Joel.³⁷ By promising that he will acquit those Yehudites guilty of a capital crime (perhaps representative of all sins, including the most serious), YHWH implies that those who will be acquitted are none other than those who heeded the call to repent in 2:12–13. In this connection it is interesting that Joel's soteriology is not explicitly cultic, but is tied to repentance, calling on Yahweh's name, and non-cultic acquittal. This is perhaps a consequence of tying grace and forgiveness to Yahweh himself in Exodus 32–34, where Israel's sin is resolved prior to the construction of the sanctuary. Once even the most serious sins of the repentant Yehudites have been acquitted, Joel sees Yahweh dwelling in Zion.

34 Nif נקה without a preposition almost always has the sense 'go unpunished' (Gen 24:41 with עלה; Exod 21:19; Num 5:28; 1 Sam 26:9; Prov 6:29; 11:21; 16:5; 17:5; 19:5, 9; 28:20; Jer 2:35; 25:29; 49:12). Once it appears to mean 'deserted, cut off' (Isa 3:25, perhaps meaning 'purged' of the male population).

35 There are about twelve instances in BH; in addition to those just mentioned, see Job 10:14.

36 R.B. Dillard suggests that Judah's retribution, even if fitting, may involve the same violence as the nations, with reference to 4:6; Dillard, "Joel," in *Hosea-Amos* (vol. 1 of *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*; ed. T. McComisky; 3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 313. For reasons laid out in the opening chapter of the present work, it is preferable to explore all plausible avenues toward the text's thematic coherence before eliminating tension by relegating some elements to later strata, as does H.W. Wolff, *Joel, Amos* (BK XIV/2; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1969), 102.

37 Crenshaw takes a similar approach, *Joel*, 202; see also H. Spieckermann, "Barmherzig und gnädig ist der Herr . . .", *ZAW* 102 (1990): 1–18.

3.3 Analysis

3.3.1 *Lexical Overlap or Distinction between Judah and Non-Israelite Groups*

Judah and the nations are distinct throughout most of the book of Joel, but this is due only partly to lexical factors. While גוי-language is used only of non-Israelite entities, אדם-language refers to both. The clearest terminological distinction is between Israel and the ‘nations,’ the ‘other’ (זר) and the ‘northerner.’ While אדם-language can refer to both, context or (much more frequently) pronominal suffixes clarify the referent. As noted above, the phrases ‘all flesh’ (3:1) and ‘everyone who calls on YHWH’ (3:5) resist any limitation of their referent to Yehudites, but do not positively establish an overlap of the two groups apart from sentence-level semantics.

3.3.2 *Semantic Overlap and/or Distinction between Judah and Non-Israelite Groups*

While Yehud as a whole is guilty of insincere repentance (2:12–13) and bloodshed (4:21), her predominant characteristic is not her sin but her suffering, whether caused by locusts sent by YHWH or by aggressive nations motivated by pride. The sins of the nations are described in terms of their effect on Yehud, and sin is the predominant characteristic of the non-Israelite nations. From the initial warning of an imminent attack in chapter 2, through the destruction of the nations and Judah’s ultimate deliverance in chapter 4, the nations threaten YHWH’s people past, present, and future, and their actions make them ripe for divine retribution.

A few points should be made here. First, the nations (and ‘Judah’) are described and identified primarily by means of moral and religious categories. Thus Judah is never promised salvation on the basis of her ethnic identity or descent from the patriarchs, nor are the non-Israelite nations condemned for being ethnically other.³⁸

Second, while sin seems to define almost absolutely the nations in Joel, it is also true that Joel does not think that his Judahite audience is without sin, as chapters 1–2 make clear. For that reason the author nowhere doubts that YHWH has acted justly in punishing her sins. Indeed, even repentance cannot oblige YHWH to act on Judah’s behalf (2:13).

Since Yehud’s guilt or need to repent is affirmed in only two Joel passages (2:12–13; 4:21), while non-Israelites (apart from 3:1, 5; 4:17) are always presented as sinful and never as capable of repentance, one might conclude that this

³⁸ Barton, *Joel, Obadiah*, 108.

moral/spiritual characterization is identical to the typically ethnic categories that nations-terminology expresses. But this would seriously oversimplify Joel's theology of the non-Israelite nations. On the one hand, unrepentant Yehudites could be seen as identical to the nations in terms of their spiritual disposition, since the nations in Joel never exhibit repentance. On the other hand, even though the nations are usually portrayed as incorrigible, several exceptions to this perspective appear in the unrestricted referent of the promises of 3:1, 5, and less clearly in the final exclusion from restored Jerusalem of 'strangers' (4:17) that leaves room (albeit only implicitly) for those among the nations who abandon their opposition to Israel's God. In all three passages, however, the semantic overlap between Israel and the nations that might favor the nations is merely introduced and never developed. While this glimmer of hope for the nations might be dimmed by Joel's inversion of Mic 4:3/Isa 2:4 in Joel 4:10, since the earlier Micah/Isaiah passage "conveyed a very compelling image of peace among the nations that is shattered in Joel," some possibility of overlap between some of the nations and repentant Israelites remains.³⁹

3.4 Conclusions

The nations-theme in Joel develops rapidly, moving from the absence of the nations in chapter 1 through a brief mention of their potential scorn in chapter 2 and hints of their possible deliverance in chapter 3 to a full-orbed depiction of their character and destiny in chapter 4.⁴⁰ Keeping in mind the exceptional importance of chapter 4 for this topic, the nations in Joel are those who acted against YHWH's people in violence and injustice in the past, including concrete offenses against YHWH (4:5[3:5]). Their actions against Israel/Judah/Yehud are presented as offenses against YHWH in light of his close association with his people. In the present, Joel threatens punishment against Israel/Judah at the hands of the nations unless they repent (2:1–17). After announcing the universal pouring out of his spirit and the deliverance of all who will call

39 Sweeney, "The Place and Function of Joel," 149.

40 Although here the goal is simply to trace a particular theme inductively, the presupposition that Joel demonstrates a significant level of unity has been well defended by, for example, W.S. Prinsloo, "The Unity of the Book of Joel," *ZAW* 104 (1992): 66–81, and E.R. Wendland, "Dramatic Rhetoric, Metaphoric Imagery, and Discourse Structure in Joel," *Journal for Semitics* 18 (2009): 205–39. Contrast the suggestion of Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen*, 433–34, that 4:4–8, 18–21 underwent 'light reworking' as part of the *Fremdvölker* II redaction.

upon him in chapter 3, the optic of chapter 4 narrows to the nations as those who characteristically oppose him and come against him in combat (4:2, 9–12), and in that context he will destroy them (4:13–17). There is thus a definitive end for such nations, represented by Egypt and Edom in 4:19, while repentant Yehud can anticipate the consummation of her relationship with YHWH and the enjoyment of all the Sinai covenant's blessings. The nations-theme is thus almost perfectly monochrome in presenting the nations as Yehud's enemies, and the exceptions to this monochrome presentation remain undeveloped. For them to be coherent with the rest of Joel's treatment of the theme, the reader would have to imagine a process in which all behavior characteristic of these persons comes to an end, and a holistic devotion to YHWH defines the identity of those who move from one group to the other (cf. 3:1, 5; 4:17).

As Joel stands within the Twelve, there is reason for Sweeney to assert that the MT order "does not provide a smoothly flowing sequence for the definition and realization of Jerusalem's ideal state of being in relation to the nations. The LXX order, which places Micah prior to Joel, appears to make much better sense."⁴¹ On the other hand, the fact that Joel and especially Amos emphasize the ultimate deliverance of Israelites (whether pre- or post-exile) while making possible some participation of non-Israelites in that deliverance suggests that Joel is not a foreign presence among the first few books of the Twelve.⁴² We will return to this apparent incoherence when we consider the nations theme across the whole collection.⁴³

41 Sweeney, "The Place and Function of Joel," 149–50.

42 A. Scharf, "The First Section of the Book of the Twelve Prophets: Hosea-Joel-Amos," *Int* 61 (2007): 138–52, points to other formal and material aspects that the first three books of the Massoretic order share.

43 See especially the comments of B.M. Zapff, "The Perspective on the Nations in the Book of Micah as a 'Systematization' of the Nations' Role in Joel, Jonah and Nahum: Reflections on a Context-Oriented Exegesis," in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve* (ed. P.L. Redditt and A. Scharf; BZAW 325; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 292–312, esp. 310–11.

The Nations in Amos

In comparison with Hosea's dismissal of any important relation (other than complete independence) between Israel/Judah and the nations, and even in comparison with Joel's eschatological focus on the nations as YHWH's opponent, Amos accords a significant place to the nations in both the immediate and distant future. Equally striking is the way that Amos uses oracles against the nations: rather than employing them to affirm Israel's safety and superiority, as suggested by some theories about their origins, Amos does precisely the opposite.¹ Beginning with brief descriptions of the nations' rebellion (פֶּשַׁע) in the present and the punishment that YHWH will soon bring upon it, the bulk of the book outlines in detail the rebellion of the northern kingdom and the inevitable, nearly complete destruction that will come upon it as a result. Further, when the book does finally develop an eschatological denouement, some of the nations participate in Israel's deliverance in surprising ways.

This interplay between Israel (and to a lesser extent Judah) and the nations makes clear that there is some significant relationship between the two in Amos. The movement from the nations to Israel in the opening chapters is unified by a shared literary form (regardless of whether the Tyre and Edom oracles derive from the same source as the others) in which every group's behavior is termed פֶּשַׁע and will meet with divine judgment, typically under the image of אֲשׁ.² A similar connection between the fates of Israel and the nations appears in the material following the book's fifth and final vision, where the complex changes announced with respect to Israel also have significant effects on some portion of the nations (9:12).

1 See J.H. Hayes, "The Usage of Oracles against Foreign Nations in Ancient Israel," *JBL* 87 (1968): 81–92. More recent theories, some of which perpetuate the same understanding, are discussed in J.B. Geyer, "Another Look at the Oracles about the Nations in the Hebrew Bible. A Response to A.C. Hagedorn," *VT* 59 (2009): 80–87.

2 A.C. Hagedorn, "Edom in the Book of Amos and Beyond," in *Aspects of Amos: Exegesis and Interpretation* (ed. A.C. Hagedorn and A. Mein; LHBOTS 536; London: T & T Clark, 2011), 41–57 (45–46) notes an interesting analogue to some of these oracles' content (though not to their form and genre) in Shalmaneser III's Kurkh Monolith: "I departed from the city of Aleppo . . . I approached the cities of . . . I captured . . . (and) his royal cities . . . I carried off his captives, his valuables, (and) his palace possessions. I set fire to his palaces."

4.1 Terminology

We begin with a taxonomy of nations terminology in Amos, using categories that are as objective as possible but which also usefully categorize Amos' language.

4.1.1 *Proper Nouns for Groups*

A number of proper nouns designate city/nation-states and ethnic groups in Amos. In two cases ethnic groups are identified by gentilics: Ammonites (בְּנֵי-עַמּוֹן, 1:13) and Cushites (בְּנֵי-כִשִּׁיִּים, 9:7). None of these entities are unattested outside Amos, although in some cases we are almost entirely without substantial knowledge of their history (e.g., Calneh). The complete absence of Assyria from the book is remarkable, even if it is hinted at as the destination of exile in 5:27 and even if the mysterious עֵנָךְ of 7:7, 8 is an Akkadian loan word that hints at the nation responsible for the destruction that is announced there. This feature is partial evidence that these oracles date from a time when there was no appreciable Assyrian threat.³

The following is an exhaustive list of the proper nouns that refer to non-Israelite nations (or, occasionally, territory) in Amos:

- Edom (1:6, 9, 11; 2:1; 9:12);
- Philistines (1:8; 6:2; 9:7);
- Tyre (1:9, 10);
- Moab (2:1, 2);
- Amorite (2:9, 10, as destroyed [שָׁמַד, as 9:8] by YHWH in the conquest of Canaan);
- Egypt (2:10, 3:1, and 9:7 as the point of origin for Israel's exodus; 3:9, as a witness of Israel's sin; 4:10, as a point of comparison; 8:8; 9:5 as the location of the Nile);
- Sodom and Gomorrah (4:11, as comparisons with punished Israel);
- Calneh (6:2, as already punished);
- Hamath the Great (6:2, as already punished; 6:14 as the northern limit of Israel's territory);
- Aram (9:7, the region standing for its associated people group).

³ Aaron Schart, personal communication.

Kir is used only as a geographic point of origin (9:7) or destination (1:5), and so is not part of the 'nations' as we designate them in Amos.⁴

4.1.2 *Cities or Smaller Groups*

The frequent mention of cities associated with the nations in Amos, and the fact that judgment is often focused on them (e.g., the gate bars, walls, and most frequently citadels), presuppose a connection between the various populations and their urban centers. The same is true of Israel and Judah, who are occasionally referred to metonymically as Samaria (3:9, 12; 4:1; 6:1; 8:14) and Zion/Jerusalem (1:2 [*bis*]; 6:1). The book's conclusion also sees restored Israel settling permanently in rebuilt cities (9:11–15). In some cases this connection of various people groups with their land has lasting significance, most clearly in the case of Israel, who returns from exile to the land given to them long ago (9:15). Israel's historic connection to the land obviously does not exclude the possibility of exile, however; the same is true of Aram (1:5). In other cases the separation of a people group from an initial geographic point of origin is positive since it leads to the later possession of another territory; this applies equally to Israel, the Cushites, and the Arameans (9:7).

The following is an exhaustive list of the proper nouns that do not denote (apart from metonymy) a whole people group but rather part of one: Damascus (1:3); the house of Hazael (1:4); ben Hadad (1:4); Biqat-Aven (1:5); Bet-Eden (1:5); Gaza (1:6); Ashdod (1:8; 3:9); Ashkelon (1:8); Ekron (1:8); Teman (1:12); Bozrah (1:12); Rabbah (1:14); Qeriyah (2:2); and Gath (6:2).

4.1.3 *גוי-Language, עם-Language, and Related Terms*

Common nouns whose lexical field normally includes nation-states and people groups appear infrequently in Amos. In the case of עם-language, apart from one general use (3:6) and one reference to the people of Aram (עם־ארם, 1:5; cf. 9:7), it consistently refers to Israel, with which it is usually in grammatical apposition (עמי ישראל in 7:8, 15; 8:2; 9:14; 9:10 has only עמי). In the five passages just noted, עם carries the first-person singular pronominal suffix that identifies that people as belonging to YHWH.

The reverse obtains with גוי-language, which Amos uses to refer to the nations other than Israel/Judah (6:1, 14; 9:9, 12). In all but one instance (6:14, an unnamed 'nation' that YHWH will raise up against Israel), these 'nations' are

4 Kir's exact location is unknown, but if it was near Elam (cf. Isa 22:6) it lay to the east of Babylonia. If it was near Emar, as an Akkadian tablet from Emar may imply when it terms Pilsu-Dagan 'king of the city of Emar' and 'king of the people of the land of Qi-ri,' it was on the upper Euphrates, south of Carchemish. Cf. C.A. Rollston, "Kir," *EDB*, 773–74.

plural (גוים), a pattern of usage that reflects both the general nature of these oracles concerning the nations and their clear distinction from Israel/Judah.

Although the phrase נקבי ראשית גוים ('the distinguished ones of the foremost of the nations') in 6:1 verbalizes Israel's self-attributed superiority to the nations in the minds of some Israelites, this expression's sarcastic nature and its attribution not to God but to Israelites allows us to attribute it to a voice that the author of this section does not find dependable (this confidence is ungrounded, as 6:2 shows). In any case, it expresses a distinction that is of negligible importance elsewhere in the book.

Apart from the cases just noted there remain only two uses of גוי-language in Amos, both of which will be extensively explored below: כל־הגוים (9:9, where the nations are the milieu in which Israel is sifted by God) and כל־הגוים אשר־ נקרא שמי (9:12, where some of the nations will be possessed by restored Israel).

4.1.4 *Generic Terms*

Finally, Amos also attests a number of generic terms for people groups, usually those other than Israel (note, exceptionally, the 'kingdom' of 7:13). These include an 'enemy' (3:11, where it is described as 'surrounding the land,' 9:4); an entity 'beyond Damascus' (5:27); the unspecified destination of 'exile,' with verbal forms of גלה (5:5; 6:7; 7:11, 17); and kingdom-language (ממלכה, 6:2), used of Calneh, Hamath the Great, and Gath.

4.2 *Characteristics and Roles of the Nations*

We are now in a position to explore the roles that the non-Israelite nations play in Amos. As suggested above, the nations are connected to Israel in a number of ways, and so at various points we will be obliged to explore Israel's role and identity simultaneously.

4.2.1 *The Nations Have Committed Offenses in the Past*

The only aspect of the nations' behavior presented in the oracles in Amos 1:3–2:3 is their violence against Israel/Judah and against one another. In a number of cases this violence is particularly gruesome or barbaric, as when Moab burns the bones of the king of Edom to lime and especially when Ammon eviscerates pregnant women (the same action is attributed to Damascus as well in LXX Amos 1:3). It is remarkable that despite the severe violence that it practiced and intentionally made characteristic of itself through literature, art, and other media, the Neo-Assyrian empire's extant texts never record this practice

and it is (probably) represented in only a small part of one series of *bas reliefs* (BM 124927).⁵

4.2.2 *The Nations Will Be Punished by YHWH in the Future*

While all of the nations in Amos 1–2 had doubtless been in military conflict and had experienced the difficulties common to human existence in the ancient Near East, Amos understands none of these past or present events as (definitive) judgment against their sins. Indeed, it is precisely the absence of such judgment that prompts Amos to announce future events in 1:3–2:3 that, at least in the cases of Philistia and Moab, will bring about the complete destruction of the group named. The affirmation *ואבדו שארית פלשתים* in 1:8 is paralleled only by statements in Amos 9, while death (*מוֹת* and *הָרָג* in 2:2, 3) is a similarly definitive fate (cf. 4:10; 6:9; 7:11, 17; 9:1, 4, 10). The inevitability of all these judgments is underlined by the repetition of “I will not turn back my wrath” (*חִיף שׁוּב*, 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 13; 2:1).⁶

Except for the Philistines and Moab, therefore, one cannot insist that the destruction of the city/nation-states named in 1:3–2:3 will be absolute or complete. Not only is absolute language consistently absent, but a remnant of Edom, condemned to judgment like all the other nations in 1:12, is explicitly said to still exist in 9:12, alongside a number of other, unnamed nations. This is especially interesting since no explicit opportunity for repentance is given to the nations in Amos. Also notable is the fact that the nations receive judgment on YHWH's terms, apart from an explicit covenantal basis.⁷

5 P. Dubovsky argues that this series depicts the evisceration of pregnant women, and is “the most brutal scene of violence against women ever captured on Neo-Assyrian reliefs,” Dubovsky, “Ripping Open Pregnant Arab Women: Reliefs in Room L of Ashurbanipal's North Palace,” *Orientalia* 78/3 (2009): 394–419 (393). He concludes that Assyrian justification for this action was the unusually obstinate rebellion and savagery of this particular enemy (416).

6 “According to the Amos model [of oracles against the nations], the targeted nation will inevitably experience the announced judgment.” P. Raabe, “Why Prophetic Oracles against the Nations?,” in *Fortunate the Eyes That See* (ed. A. Beck et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 236–57 (251). A. Scharf draws attention to a possible indication of shaping, or perhaps intentional ordering, in the Twelve by noting that while ‘it’ is somewhat ambiguous in Amos, the preceding emphasis in Joel on judgment against the nations (esp. the ‘fire’ in Joel 2:3) leads the reader to identify its referent as the Day of YHWH on the unrepentant nations. Scharf, “The First Section of the Book of the Twelve Prophets: Hosea-Joel-Amos,” *Int* 61 (2007): 138–52 (145).

7 R. Chisholm suggests that *פֶּשַׁע* has “a covenantal flavor,” and that the covenant with Noah (specifically respect for human life) may be in view. Chisholm, “Amos,” *New Dictionary of*

4.2.3 *The Nations as Witnesses or Instruments of Israel's Judgment*

Possibly reflecting the same strategy that makes the oracles against the nations serve the larger rhetorical purpose of announcing Israel's judgment, the nations are not immediately swept from the scene after Amos 2:3. Rather, they appear in at least two other roles prior to the book's conclusion. First, Ashdod and Egypt are summoned to be spectators of Samaria's social tumult and oppression (3:9), a situation which must be prior to the fall of Samaria. The nations are also implicated, although not by name, in the punishment of Israel, most evidently in its exile. Since exile of the northern kingdom to the southern kingdom of Judah would be unintelligible and is historically unattested, a non-Israelite nation or group of nations must be in view in passages that speak of Israel's exile. In 3:11 this 'enemy' surrounds the land, while in 6:14 an anonymous 'nation' is emphasized by its appearance at the end of the phrase despite being the verbal object. The statement in 5:27 that Israel "will go into exile beyond Damascus" clearly implicates a non-Israelite nation, most likely Assyria, in the exile of the northern kingdom.⁸

4.2.4 *The Nations as Objects of Comparison*

One other notable role given to the nations in Amos is that of comparison. This occurs first in 6:2, where some misfortune has come upon Calneh, Hamath the Great, and Gath. These situations are presented as proof that Israel, whose power and territory do not greatly exceed those of the states or cities named, cannot depend on her size for security.

The comparison between Israel and other nations plays a much more significant role in 9:7, which relativizes Israel's escape from Egypt by reminding Israelites that YHWH also effected the migration of the Philistines from Caphtor and of the Arameans from Kir. The comparison with Kush strongly suggests that the point of the comparison with the Philistines and Arameans is not simply the parity of the movement of people groups, but the relativizing of any special status as God's chosen people for those in Israel who character-

Biblical Theology (ed. T.D. Alexander and B.S. Rosner; Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 2000), 242–45 (243). See also P. Berthoud, "The Covenant and the Social Message of Amos," *European Journal of Theology* 14/2 (2005): 99–109.

8 The mention of fishhooks in 4:2 may echo a Neo-Assyrian motif, and the probable use of a term for tin derived from Akkadian *annaku* in 7:7 may hint at the specific nation by which God will punish Israel; so S.M. Paul, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), 233. See in favor of retaining the traditional 'lead' instead of 'tin' B.J. Noonan, "There and Back Again: 'Tin' or 'Lead' in Amos 7:7–9?," *VT* 63 (2013): 299–307.

istically reject YHWH's will.⁹ This is confirmed by the subsequent context, in which sinful Israelites are destroyed while it is anticipated that other Israelites will survive.

4.2.5 *The YHWH-owned Nations Subjected to the Renewed Davidic Line*

The final role given to the nations in Amos is also the most complex, focusing on their relationship to eschatological Israel after its purification (9:8–10) and renewal (9:11).¹⁰ While our focus is on the reference to the 'remnant of Edom and all the nations over whom my name is called' (9:12), we first need to take into account what is said of Israel in 9:7–11.

4.2.5.1 The Background: Purified Israel (Amos 9:7–10)

We turn momentarily to 9:7, where YHWH's comparison of his involvement in Israel's formation with his activity in the formation of other nations is a strong argument against Israel's absolute uniqueness.¹¹ In a thought that may reach back to the confrontation between Amos and Jeroboam's priest (7:10–17), Israel's status as YHWH's nation is forfeited by her sin (implied by the reference to exile in 7:17, not to mention the preceding and subsequent visions), and she has for the most part become a 'sinful kingdom' (ממלכה החטאה) that will be destroyed (9:8).

The presence of covenantal-moral terminology (חטאה) in the description of the northern kingdom in 9:8a provides the grounds for this judgment and anticipates the developing focus on sinners *within* Israel in 9:10 (כל חטאי עמי).

9 The possibility that Israel would be destroyed for her covenant violations helps explain the apparent contradiction between the logic of 2:9–10; 3:1–2, which set Israel apart from the nations on the basis of the exodus, covenant, and conquest, and the abrogation of that special status for many (sinful) Israelites as announced in 9:7–10. The conditional nature of Israel's special status is explicit at the covenant's founding (Exod 19:5–6) and in numerous other texts, especially those threatening that God will treat Israel as he did the Canaanites if she is not faithful to him (e.g., Josh 24:20; cf. Lev 26:14–39; and Deut 28:32–57). This is demonstrated in the Achan narrative of Joshua 7.

10 Here and elsewhere I use 'eschatological' to denote future circumstances that are significantly discontinuous with the present, "to such an extent that one can speak of an entirely new state of reality." D.L. Petersen, "Eschatology (Old Testament)," *ABD* 2:575–79 (575).

11 This may have in view the expulsion of Israel from a suzerain-vassal treaty which she has violated (see above), the Mesopotamian ethnicity of Abram (Josh 24:2), or both. While Amos' immediate focus is on the north, both the election and exodus mentioned here, and the references to Zion/Jerusalem elsewhere in the book, argue against seeing this as *only* the destruction of the north and the preservation of the south.

It is notable that the term ‘sinners’ is more theologically precise than the other categories used in this context (e.g., ‘house of Jacob’).¹² Accordingly, YHWH does not hesitate to definitively punish this group: their precise identification within Israel/Judah allows for the assigning of a definitive personal fate.¹³

This final and ultimate inner-Israelite distinction is developed in 9:8b by means of the contrasting affirmation (which shares the root שׁמַד) that YHWH will *not completely* destroy the ‘house of Jacob.’¹⁴ Unless the author/redactor failed to see contradiction between 8a and 8b, and so understood the ‘sinful kingdom’ as identical to the ‘house of Jacob,’ the referent of ‘house of Jacob’ must be partially or entirely distinct from that of the ‘sinful kingdom.’¹⁵ Indeed, the sifting imagery in the following verse seems to require that the house of Jacob overlaps only partially with the sinful kingdom.

The image of literal destruction gives way in 9:9 to the metaphor of sifting, which also involves a binary distinction, between the grain and the chaff. The ‘house of Israel’ (most likely identical to the ‘house of Jacob’ in 9:8, since both terms refer to entities in the same circumstances undergoing the same process of purification) will be “shaken out among the nations” at YHWH’s command

12 So also P.R. Noble, “Amos’ Absolute ‘No,’” *VT* 41 (1997): 329–40 (334–35).

13 While ‘destroy from the ground’ (שׁמַד rather than מַחַה as in Gen 7:4, 23) does not echo the flood, it is surely complete and definitive, and has Deuteronomistic overtones (cf. Deut 6:15; 28:51; Josh 23:15; 1 Kgs 13:34). K. Koenen, *Heil den Gerechten—Unheil den Sündern! Ein Beitrag zur Theologie der Prophetenbücher* (BZAW 229; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 18–67, explores similar purifications of ‘Israel’ in Isa 29:17–21; Zeph 2:4f.; 3:11–13; Ezek 20:32–38; Mal 3:13–21. He argues that the Day of YHWH tradition in 9:7–8a suits well the book’s announcements of judgment and so could be original to the prophet himself (12), while 9:8b–10 redactionally qualifies the immediately preceding section.

14 When the infinitive absolute is followed by the cognate finite verb, some sort of emphasis is present. C.H.J. van der Merwe, J.A. Naudé, and J.H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (Biblical Languages 3; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), among others, are unwilling to correlate a specific emphasis with a specific word order (158–59). The closest analogue to this passage is Gen 3:4, which shares the syntax negative + infinitive absolute + finite verb. The emphasis on degree seems well-suited to the context’s emphasis on the remnant; cf. the same sense for a similar syntactic construction in Jdg 1:28.

15 As suggested by Koenen, *Heil den Gerechten*, 14–15. It is at least equally plausible that the ‘sinful kingdom’ is distinct from the ‘house of Jacob’ in light of the emphasis throughout the HB on the continuity of the divine promises to Jacob and his descendants, something Koenen recognizes but does not see as undermining his assertion that both 9:8a and 9:8b refer to ‘Israel’ (16 n. 19). J. Jeremias, *The Book of Amos* (trans. D.W. Stott; OTL; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1998), 128, suggests that “For Amos and his followers in the book of Amos (cf. esp. 9:8b), ‘Jacob’ never refers to the state, but rather always to that entity which is totally focused and dependent upon God.”

(9:9a). It is also clearly affirmed that the sifting will not mix the metaphorical grain and chaff, which refer to non-sinners and sinners in Israel, respectively.¹⁶

The third and last description of this process of purification appears in 9:10, and YHWH again enacts it. This verse takes up the sinner/non-sinner contrast already used in 9:8, and the pandemic extent of the judgment (at least within Israel) is clear from the כָּל. Ironically, the 'sinners' are those who have affirmed their inviolability in the face of threatened punishment—this signifies Amos' strongest response to those who reject his message.¹⁷

Amos 9:7–10 thus begins with a historical argument for the relative nature of Israel's election before developing a covenantal-moral description of definitive judgment against 'sinners' within Israel/Jacob.¹⁸ Mainly because of the nature of the distinction made here, it is very difficult to see this being fulfilled in the Assyrian conquest of Israel, just as it is implausible to see the restoration of 9:11–15 fully realized in the return of many Judean exiles to Yehud. Both realities are better understood as partial fulfillments of the Day of Yahweh (cf. 2:16;

16 It might be suggested that the remnant is not in view in 9:10 because the construct relationship cannot mean 'the sinners of my people,' but this is untenable in view of 9:8–9. In a similar vein, the claim that the construct relationship cannot express a partitive sense is not conclusive; see especially the corporate (e.g., lips of the king), 'part-divided whole' (e.g., sons of the prophets), and 'characteristic' relationships noted by van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *Reference Grammar*, 198–200. Noble reaches the improbable conclusion that "the prophet announces the total destruction of God's people, down to the very last person" (Noble, "Absolute 'No,'" 338); Koenen, *Heil den Gerechten*, more plausibly concludes that the meaning of the redacted passage is "eine Trennung von Sündern und Nicht-Sündern" (18).

17 Cf. K. Möller, *A Prophet in Debate: The Rhetoric of Persuasion in the Book of Amos* (JSOTSup 372; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2003). I disagree with A. Schar, "The Fifth Vision of Amos in Context," in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve* (ed. P.L. Redditt and A. Schar; BZAW 325; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 46–71 (54–55), that the whole northern kingdom is in view here. The 'kingdom' described here (in contrast to 1 Kgs 13:34, which he cites as a Dtr parallel, where the 'house of Jeroboam' is not necessarily metonymy for the whole northern kingdom) is not specified (despite certain aspects of the north embodying evil, as in 7:10–17), and its key identifying characteristic is sinfulness. This makes it equally applicable to Judah, which I presume would have been an attractive way for the Deuteronomists that Schar sees as responsible for this passage to interpret it; cf. 7:9. In other words, Amos' remnant theory is more sophisticated, or at least articulated on other terms, than that of Kings.

18 J. Kaminsky's stimulating study of election in the biblical tradition pays surprisingly little attention to the remnant concept; *Yet I Loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election* (Abingdon: Nashville, 2007), esp. 147–58.

4:12; ch. 5; 6:3; 8:2, 9, 11, 13; 9:11, 13), which post-exilic prophets saw as having ongoing relevance for the fates of Israel and the nations alike.

4.2.5.2 The Renewed Davidic Line (9:11)

With this background in mind we can now consider the future divine reconstruction of the Davidic line announced in 9:11.¹⁹ A well-known crux is the meaning and referent of סִכַּת דָּוִיד, which the text describes as fallen.²⁰ While some interpreters argue that the Jerusalem temple is in view, the movement from the restoration of this entity in 9:11 to the subjugation of (some of) the remaining non-Israelites in 9:12 must be reckoned with due to the לְמַעַן that begins 9:12.²¹ The typical order of events in the ancient Near East is of conquest *followed by* temple building.²² Furthermore, in the only other biblical use of the phrase in Isa 16:5, it is fairly clear that Davidic rule is in view, even if the image of the tent by itself is cultic.²³ The use of Hifil קִוּם with YHWH as the subject and David's descendant(s) as the object (sometimes under the metaphor of a house) in the classic description of the covenant with David in 2 Sam 7:12 is further evidence in favor of the Davidic line as the referent of סִכַּת דָּוִיד. Especially if this verse refers to the exilic period, the imagery of the booth is intelligible as a diminutive of house. The context would thus suggest that

19 For a detailed redaction-critical reconstruction of this passage, see Schart, "Fifth Vision." Schart sees 9:11–15 as the last stage in a series of redactions that follows 9:1–4a; 9:4b broadened what was probably a focus on Bethel to include all the sanctuaries frequented by the north; 9:7–10 identified the north as the 'sinners' in a Dtr-like addition; 9:5–6 added a universal scope and opened the way for the destruction of Jerusalem's temple; and 9:11–15 introduced restoration, followed by 9:12a, 13, which foresee an eschatological restoration of Israel.

20 Cf. 5:2; 8:14, where sinful Israel has fallen or will fall with נָפַל, used only in these cases of the nation or part of it; contrast 9:7 where no sifted 'grain' will fall.

21 J. Radine suggests on the basis of Lam 2:6 and the Lament over Ur that סִכַּת דָּוִיד refers to the temple, not to the Davidic monarchy; see his *The Book of Amos in Emergent Judah* (FAT 2:45; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 199–205. Schart, "Fifth Vision," 58–59 sees an allusion to the temple in Amos 9:1, and thinks some more general entity is perhaps in view in light of the context's focus on Israel and its sinful and remnant parts, but also finds reasonable "a small version of the Davidic dynasty" that would entail "a modest version of political independence."

22 Cf. Enūma Eliš, tablet vi; V.A. Hurowitz, *I Have Built You an Exalted House: Temple Building in the Bible in Light of Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic Writings* (JSOTSup 115; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992).

23 See the helpful discussion of H. Wildberger, *Isaiah 13–27* (trans. T.H. Trapp; CC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 143–44.

despite being weakened and perhaps interrupted, the Davidic line would once again function as it had long ago (כימי עולם).²⁴

4.2.5.3 The Renewed Davidic Line ‘Possesses’ Some of the Nations (9:12)
Amos 9:12 asserts that the Davidic line will be reestablished in order to “possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations over whom my name is called.”²⁵ A significant difficulty in understanding the verse itself, and its contribution to the nations-theme in Amos, is the tension between the adversarial Israel-nations relationship suggested by ירש and the very positive image of YHWH’s unilateral adoption of the nations in the phrase נקרא שמי עליהם.²⁶ It is also striking that the author of 9:12 contemplates the possibility of the nations’ survival without clearly attributing any repentance to them (contrast the prominence of repentance as a prerequisite for Israel’s wellbeing in Amos 5).

The hope that the restored Davidic line would ultimately prevail, and the related promise in 9:15 that Israel will never again be uprooted from its land, portray a new, permanent relation between Israel and the nations which can be explained several ways. (1) The relationship may be one in which Israel dominates the nations through force: the nations continue their aggression, but without success. This possibility is unlikely in light of the strong contextual emphasis on the blessings of the Sinai covenant (9:13–14), since these blessings go hand-in-hand with international peace. (2) Israel’s new relationship with the nations may be such that the nations no longer militate against Israel, whose relative strength would in this case be unimportant. This understanding implies some sort of reconciliation between Israel and the nations, or at least the nations’ submission to Israel. (3) If the terms in 9:12 refer to territory and not to people, the question would not need to be raised, but this seems unlikely. Although ירש can take peoples or their territory as its object, כליהגים never refers to territory in Amos. It is also very unlikely that שארית in construct with a

²⁴ This is suggested by Jeremias, *Amos*, 167.

²⁵ I have attempted to unravel some facets of this passage in D. Timmer, “The Use and Abuse of Power in Amos: Identity and Ideology,” *JSOT* 39.1 (2014): 101–118 (doi 10.1177/0309089214551516), on which I occasionally draw here with permission.

²⁶ J. Wöhrle sees the differences between 9:12a, b as dictated by the first half’s focus on Edom versus the second half’s focus on the Davidic promise, *Die frühen Sammlungen des Zwölfprophetenbuchs. Entstehung und Komposition* (BZAW 360; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 136, 466; idem, *Der Abschluss des Zwölfprophetenbuchs: Buchübergreifende Redaktionsprozesse in den späten Sammlungen* (BZAW 389; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 173–89.

proper noun would refer to territory, since the syntagm characteristically refers to people groups²⁷ or to nation-states inclusive of their populations.²⁸

In order to determine how some sort of divinely-enabled action on Israel's part leads to her 'possessing' (at least some of) the nations that remain, we must also consider the nations who will be possessed.²⁹ In Amos, the 'remnant of Edom' would most naturally refer to those Edomites who survived YHWH's judgment against them in 1:11–12. As for the relation between this 'Edom' and 'those nations' in 9:12, the "lopsided and awkward" syntax,³⁰ which uses only one definite direct object marker for what are apparently two verbal objects, is hardly an insurmountable problem, since BH not infrequently omits the object marker on the second of two related verbal objects.³¹ It is more difficult to decide whether Edom and 'all the nations. . . ' should be read together as a composite absolute element with which שְׂאֵרִית is in construct. The punishment of many nations announced earlier in the book (1:3–2:3) makes it more likely that a remnant of those punished nations, rather than the nations untouched by any divine retribution, would eventually enter a radically different relationship with purified Israel.³²

With this preliminary understanding of the nations in Amos 9:12, we take up again the problematic meaning of יִרְשׁ in the same verse. Elsewhere in the HB the land of Canaan is the most frequent object of the verb.³³ When the nations are in view (e.g., Exod 34:24), the syntax is sometimes different (Hif יִרְשׁ with מִכְּפָנֵי), and the Hifil form can appear by itself, with the nations as its object

27 H. Wildberger, "שְׂאֵר," *TLOT*, 1284–92 (1286). This coincides with the use of the remnant-concept in cognate literatures per G.F. Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah* (Andrews University Monographs 5; Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1972), 100.

28 J. Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen*, 120, seems to consider this option together with the other, speaking of "der Einnahme Edoms und weiterer Völker" that includes "eine Erweiterung des eigenen Gebietes."

29 In context, the most proximate people group is the Israelites who are not 'sinners' and so survive the purifying judgments of 9:8–10. LXX Amos 9:12 differs significantly from MT 9:12, and so can shed little light on the text. See further on the grammatical vagaries of this section J. Nogalski, "The Problematic Suffixes of Amos 1X 11," *VT* 93 (1993): 411–18.

30 F.I. Andersen and D.N. Freedman, *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 24A; New York: Doubleday, 1989), 890.

31 See van der Merwe, Naudé, and Kroeze, *Reference Grammar*, 246–47, and cf. Jdg 1:4; 1 Sam 8:14.

32 For the opposing view, see Paul, *Amos*, 291.

33 Gen 15:7; similarly 28:4; analogously the 'gates of [Israel's] enemies,' Gen 22:17; 24:60, a significant element given its close connection with the promise to Abraham; cf. also Amos 9:15.

(Num 21:32).³⁴ There is no consistent difference in meaning between the Qal and Hifil forms of the verb, however.³⁵

Within the Twelve, the sole occurrence of ירש prior to Amos is not relevant (Hos 9:6), but in Obadiah the announcement of the Day of YHWH is described as retribution (Obad 15b, 16a) for violence (חמס) 'against your brother Jacob' (10) that will lead to the destruction of 'all the nations' (16b). In this process those who return from exile will possess their possessions (ירש), specified in the following verses (with frequent repetition of ירש) as the house of Esau, the lowlands of the Philistines, the territories of Ephraim, Samaria, and Gilead (19), and the Negeb (20). In contrast to this destruction stand the deliverance and dominance of 'mount Zion,' 'the house of Jacob,' and 'the house of Joseph.'

Thus far the evidence for understanding ירש as 'possess territory or dispossess a people group through some use of force' is clear within the Twelve and within the HB more broadly. Such a sense still jars, however, with the following phrase that qualifies בל-הגוים, since to 'call one's name over' as the collocation of ירש with God as the verbal subject never refers in BH to a people group in the context of a military conquest.³⁶ Most frequently, the collocation ירש has as its object either Jerusalem or its temple (ca. 10x) or Israel (ca. 5x).³⁷ When used of a people group with God as the verbal subject, the phrase denotes Yahweh's ownership of his covenant people, a relationship established not through military conflict but through YHWH's unilateral offer and Israel's acceptance of a mutual covenant relationship.³⁸ Thus while one might initially assume that the expression 'call my name over' echoes the

34 While the land of Canaan is the most common object of the verb, peoples rather than territory can also serve as the verb's object; see H.H. Schmid, "ירש," *TLOT* 2:578–81 (579), and cf. Deut 2:12, 21, 22; 9:1, 5; 12:29; 18:14; 19:1; Jdg 11:23.

35 *K-B*, 441; H.H. Schmid, "ירש," *TLOT* 2:579; N. Lohfink, "ירש," *TDOT* 6:368–96, esp. 393–94.

36 2 Sam 12:28 refers to a city; 2 Sam 18:18 is similar but not the exact idiom; Ps 49:11 uses the phrase of land-property; Isa 4:1 uses it to describe a marriage relationship that entails obligations between husband and wife.

37 On Jerusalem, see Jer 25:29; Dan 9:18, 19. On the temple, see 1 Kgs 8:43 // 2 Chron 6:33; Jer 7:10, 11, 14, 30; 32:34; 34:15. Of Israel, the description is voiced by Moses, Deut 28:9–10; by God, 2 Chron 7:14; by Daniel, Dan 9:19; Isa 63:19 uses it to say that because of her judgment Israel has become like "those over whom you never ruled, over whom your name was never called;" Israel uses it of herself in Jer 14:9. Exceptionally, Jeremiah uses it of himself in Jer 15:16.

38 A.S. van der Woude, "שם," *TLOT* 3:1348–67 (1363); C.J. Labuschagne, "קרא," *TLOT* 3:1158–64 (1162). So also J. Niehaus, "Amos," in *Hosea, Joel, Amos* (vol. 1 of *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*; ed. Thomas E. McComiskey; 3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 492.

oracles against the nations in 1:3–2:3, this understanding falters in light of the fact that the phrase never means ‘utter oracles against’ or ‘punish/subjugate.’³⁹

While some tension between these apparently conflicting models of the eschatological relationship between purified Israel and the nations seems inevitable, the tension may not be so great as to undo the coherence of the nations theme here, and several factors suggest that a non-military sense for *יִרַשׁ* is appropriate here.⁴⁰ First, rather than merely expelling squatters who settled in Judah during the exile, or even re-establishing control over territory traditionally considered Israelite, the actions of the renewed Davidic house affect an unspecified number of nations whose territories inevitably lie outside Israel’s borders.⁴¹ At the same time, the strong emphasis on Israel’s permanent settlement in her homeland in 9:15 makes it unlikely that we are dealing here with an empire that expands by exterminating native populations and having its own citizens take their place. This makes the context of the ‘dispossession’ here unique, with Israel exerting control or sovereignty outside its boundaries but with Israelites living only in historically Israelite territory.⁴²

Second, there are several analogues for such a scenario in the Hebrew Bible. In the story of Rahab and her family in the Book of Joshua, those Canaanites who refuse to recognize YHWH’s unique sovereignty fall with Jericho, while Rahab and her family are included in Israel. That episode suggests that religion, not ethnicity, is the preeminent identifier of those who are to be dispossessed in Israel’s initial entry into Canaan. Amos exhibits a similar line of thought wherein the destruction of sinners coupled with the survival of a ‘remnant’ of Edom leads the reader to believe that only Edomite sinners have been destroyed (cf. 1:11–12), so that the Edomite remnant might be dispossessed as was Rahab, who became an adopted Israelite in what has just become Israelite territory.⁴³

39 E.g., M.E. Polley, *Amos and the Davidic Empire: A Socio-Historical Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 74.

40 Lohfink, “*יִרַשׁ*,” suggests on the contrary that Amos 9:12 is a “post-Deuteronomistic” use that still includes the idea of dispossession by force, 371, 393.

41 Here I assume that Amos envisions a return from exile as an early step in the process of restoration; cf. 5:5, 27; 7:17; and esp. 9:9, 14–15.

42 J. Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen des Zwölfprophetenbuchs*, 120, understands 9:12 similarly.

43 D. Rottzoll, *Studien zur Redaktion und Komposition des Amosbuchs* (BZAW 243; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), 278, also concludes that Edom’s ‘remnant’ consists of those who have escaped divine judgment.

Another analogue, strongly influenced by the vision of the Davidide's global dominion and so more proximate to our passage, appears in Psalm 72.⁴⁴ D. Smith-Christopher notes that the depiction of the nations there moves from their 'bowing' and 'licking dust' before the Davidide to "these same kingdoms being blessed through the agency of the Ruler of Israel."⁴⁵ Near the end of the psalm the author even prays, "May all nations bless themselves by him, let them pronounce him happy!" (72:17).⁴⁶ The subdued non-Israelites in this psalm (cf. 72:8–11) clearly reside in their own homelands, but come under Davidic rule and respond to that new reality with submission and even enthusiasm in light of the Davidide's exceptional justice and mercy (72:12–14). Most notably, the submission of these parties to the house of David occurs without violence,⁴⁷ and in some cases perhaps even voluntarily (72:11).⁴⁸

44 Additional references include Ps 2:8–11; Mic 5:3–5; Ps 89:26; Zech 9:10; Isa 11:6–10. Cf. M. Sæbø, "Vom Grossreich zum Weltreich: Erwägungen zu Pss. lxxii 8, lxxxix 26; Sach. ix 10b," *VT* 28 (1978): 83–91.

45 D. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Israel* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 134.

46 Notice the echo of Gen 12:1–3, also noted by H.-J. Kraus, *Psalms 60–150* (trans. H.C. Oswald; C.C.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 80.

47 Even if actual harm (i.e., violence) is lacking, the scenario could still be military, or at least involve a display of power of some sort. Note Van Winkle on similar concepts in Isaiah: "The tension between universalism and nationalism may be resolved by recognizing that for Deutero-Isaiah the salvation of the nations does not preclude their submission to Israel. The prophet does not envisage the co-equality of Jews and gentiles. He expects that Israel will be exalted, and that she will become YHWH's agent who will rule the nations in such a way that justice is established and mercy shown." D. Van Winkle, "The Relationship of the Nations to YHWH and to Israel in Isaiah XL–LV," *VT* 35 (1985): 446–58 (457).

48 It is not clear that the expression 'licking the dust,' attested in only two other places, denotes military conflict. In Mic 7:17, the phrase is part of a lengthy description of the nations' response to YHWH's deliverance of his people. They "become ashamed of all their might, they put their hand on their mouth, their ears become deaf, they lick the dust like a serpent, [lick] like a reptile of the earth, they tremble [and come] from their fortresses to YHWH our God, they are in dread and fear before you." M. Roth, *Israel und die Völker im Zwölfprophetenbuch: Eine Untersuchung zu den Büchern Joel, Jona, Micha und Nahum* (FRLANT 210; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 203, favors seeing the possibility of the formerly rebellious nations turning to YHWH after their humiliation in 7:16–17. In Isa 49:23, J. Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 311, sees a reversal of roles that leads to the nations, who formerly exercised control over the exiles (39:22), offering to support and nourish Zion, participating in and serving the good of Zion. Interestingly, the nations undertake this transformation as the consequence of YHWH summoning the nations to Zion (Isa 49:22), reversing their adversarial role following the same gesture in 5:25–30. S. Paul, *Isaiah 40–66: Translation and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 339–42, concludes similarly.

Third, a non-violent sense for יִרֵשׁ is indirectly supported by Braulik's argument that Deuteronomy's description of exiled Israel's return to the land in Deut 30:4–5 has omitted the military tone and features of Deut 7:1, which lays out guidelines for the initial conquest of Canaan. Braulik suggests that "verwendet 30,5a יִרֵשׁ q. für die nachexilische Neubesiedlung des Väterlandes unkriegrisch, vergleichbar etwa der Landneuverteilung in einem Erlassjahr."⁴⁹ While the verbal object of יִרֵשׁ in Deut 30:4–5 is the land and not a people group, it is significant that Amos 9, like Deuteronomy 30, also speaks of a future, restored Israel rather than historical, invading Israel. While one could argue that Deuteronomy 30 assumes that the land remained empty during Israel's anticipated exile, so that there would be no non-Israelite population to displace upon return, such an interpretation seems implausible. Deuteronomy speaks of the land as perfectly suited to habitation, and in later centuries it probably would have been clear that exile would probably involve the relocation of another people group to Israel's former territory.⁵⁰ Deut 30:4–5 does therefore seem to leave some room for imagining Israel's return to the land in terms of repossessing a land with a mixed population without significant conflict. As a result, its perspective (and use of יִרֵשׁ) should not be forced into the mold established by the conquest traditions that predominate in Joshua and Judges.⁵¹

Finally, we can add the contextual observation that since in Amos 9 YHWH has called his name over these nations just as he called it over Israel, they become his people in essentially the same way.⁵² (Destruction would leave no people for YHWH to possess in any case.) Taking these points into

49 G. Braulik, "Die Völkervernichtung und die Rückkehr Israels ins Verheissungsland: Hermeneutische Bemerkungen zum Buch Deuteronomium," in *Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic Literature* (ed. M. Vervenne and J. Lust; BETL 133; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 3–38, esp. 33–37.

50 E. Ben Zvi argues well that the 'empty land' motif was not intended as historical description, but served rhetorical and theological ends; see Ben Zvi, "Total Exile, Empty Land and the General Intellectual Discourse in Yehud," in *The Concept of Exile in Ancient Israel and Its Historical Contexts* (ed. E. Ben Zvi and C. Levin; BZAW 404; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 155–68. See also R.P. Carroll, "The Myth of the Empty Land," *Semeia* 59 (1992): 79–93, who suggests that in such representations "foreigners are invisible in terms of divine plans;" K.W. Whitelam, "Israel's Tradition of Origin: Reclaiming the Land," *JSOT* 14 (1989): 19–42.

51 At the same time, Deuteronomy speaks only of a return to Israel's historic territory, and while this may include territory held by Edom at some point it can hardly be extended to include territory belonging to an unspecified number of other 'nations.'

52 J.S. Kaminsky reaches nearly the same conclusion in his discussion of Isa 19:18–25, arguing that such texts speak of "Gentile inclusion . . . not by eliminating or downplaying the idea

consideration, the analogy with Israel's creation through liberation favors seeing the Davidic possession of the remnant of Edom and all the nations over whom YHWH's name is called as the non-violent establishment of relationship dependent upon some sort of divine initiative ('YHWH who does this') rather than YHWH making these nations his own through violent conquest.

4.3 Analysis

4.3.1 *Lexical Overlap or Separation between Israel/Judah and the Nations*

The closest that the book of Amos comes to lexical overlap between Israel and non-Israelite nations is the comparison of Israel with the Cushites in 9:7a and the comparison between Israel's exodus and the divine relocation of the Philistines and the Arameans in 9:7b. As noted above, this is a comparison, and as such requires that the lexical labels remain distinct so that the semantic similarities can be readily perceived.

Since 9:7 is only a comparison, and not a strict identification, there is no indication that the terminological distinction between Israel/Judah and the nations disappears in Amos. This holds true even in the context of exile, where 'the house of Israel' continues as such despite its obvious location among other, dominant political entities. Furthermore, YHWH will return 'my people Israel' (purified but still organically related to Amos's audience) from exile to their land (9:14–15). This distinction between Israel and the nations is based on the original election and relationship established in the context of the exodus from Egypt (3:1–2), and it holds lasting significance in all the proposed layers of the book and in all the scenarios it envisages.

4.3.2 *Partial Semantic Identity of Israel/Judah and the Nations*

Amos's opening sequence of oracles (1:3–2:16) gives clear evidence that both Israel and the nations have sinned, and are therefore to come under divine judgment. In other words, they are in the same moral category although their national identity remains intact and distinct. Similar overlap, albeit with the opposite significance, appears at the close of the book. There a remnant of Edom and the nations over whom YHWH has called his name survive the judgment, as do those in Israel who were not sinners. In this latter case national categories are again preserved, but cannot by themselves explain why two distinct people groups would survive a common judgment. It is thus reasonable

of Israel's election, but by continuing to affirm it." *Yet, I Have Loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 152.

to assume that these two groups have survived for the same moral reason, although the means by which the nations become acceptable to YHWH, and by which he deals with their sin, is not specified beyond the simple punishment of their sins in 1:3–2:3 and the effects of the act of divine possession that makes them belong to him.

No less important than this moral similarity is the idea of belonging to YHWH. In linguistic terms, ownership by YHWH is a criterion of identity common to purified Israel and the remnant of the nations.⁵³ Because the status of belonging to YHWH is far more important than the relationship between the two groups considered separately, it relativizes any distinction between the two groups that would undermine their common identity as the people of YHWH. This scenario is the precise opposite of referential identity,⁵⁴ in which “expressions have the same referent but not description.” Instead, here two distinct referents share a single, preeminent characteristic.⁵⁵

Finally, a clear similarity between historical Israel and several people groups is established in 9:7 by means of the comparative particle כִּי, with the result that Israel’s exodus from Egypt is relativized. This simile stops short of identification, however, and is not sufficiently reinforced by characterization so as to overcome the empirical distinction between Israel and the groups named there as discrete nation/city-states.

4.3.3 *Semantic Distinction between Israel/Judah and the Nations*

Israel in Amos is unique on the basis of YHWH’s choice of her in the context of exodus-Sinai to the exclusion of all other people groups (3:1–2, with רק אתכם 3:1 and ידעתי מכל משפחות האדמה 3:2). Despite the radical changes that Amos foresees in Israel in the future (judgment, purification, elimination of sinners), and despite the important relativization of Israel’s exodus from Egypt in 9:7, there will remain a remnant of Israel that possesses an organic relation to this historical Israel.

53 See A. Gibson, *Biblical Semantic Logic: A Preliminary Analysis* (2nd ed.; The Biblical Seminar 75; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 140–50, for a helpful theoretical explanation of this concept.

54 J.F.A. Sawyer, *Semantics in Biblical Research: New Methods of Defining Hebrew Words for Salvation* (SBT 2nd Series 24; London: SCM, 1972), 75–76.

55 Gibson, *Biblical Semantic Logic*, 17.

4.4 Conclusions

While Israel and the nations remain distinct throughout Amos, this distinction is not static, since both groups undergo not only changes but outright division and re-identification. The distinction between Israel and the nations exists before Israel falls under judgment, and it remains (but now with differences in both Israel and the nations) after divine judgment falls on both groups with devastating results for a large segment of each group. This future divine action allows some of the nations to share Israel's most significant identifying feature, being YHWH's covenant partner, but also entails the divine judgment of sinners inside and outside Israel. This Heil/Unheil dichotomy creates significant discontinuity in the nations-theme, much as it does in the Israel-theme.⁵⁶

The interrelation of Israel and the nations in Amos bears further reflection, especially since the fates of the two are related in a number of different circumstances. Far from being totally destroyed by the punishments announced in 1:3–2:3 (in several cases for sins against Israel/Judah), some of the nations come to enjoy a radically new, positive status. The movement in Amos from judgment to restoration on the part of Israel is paralleled by, and can even be said to play a role in, the inclusion of some of the (previously judged) nations in a comparable relationship with YHWH, as the sequence of 9:11–12 suggests.⁵⁷

56 Many continue to see Amos 9:11–12 as secondary, including Wöhrle, who begins his treatment of the section by affirming its secondary nature due to the introduction of the new element of salvation for Israel; Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen*, 119–20. Whether this is due to semantic discontinuity (as Wöhrle suggests) or the presupposition that early Israelite prophets could not see beyond judgment to deliverance (as Wellhausen asserted long ago), neither of these considerations should be allowed to settle the question unilaterally. Our focus on semantic development prompts us to recognize that such development, while not necessarily present, *can* be present in even relatively early works like the main sections of Amos.

57 T. Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah: The Redaction Criticism of the Prophetic Books* (Biblical Seminar 20; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 69, suggests that “the theme of Israel among the nations is inevitably linked with the idea of covenant election.” Kominsky puts it nicely, saying of many of the HB's authors that “rather than moving from particularism toward universalism, they move toward universalism through an ever deepening particularism,” *Yet I Loved Jacob*, 157. Amos does not give enough information to determine whether inclusion or transformation is the better term to describe how these nations come to share the most prominent feature of Israel's identity; see the helpful discussion of that spectrum in D.L. Smith-Christopher, “Between Ezra and Isaiah: Exclusion, Transformation and Inclusion of the ‘Foreigner’ in Post-exilic Biblical Theology,” in *Ethnicity and the Bible* (ed. M. Brett; BIS 19; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 117–42. Smith-Christopher observes that “the ‘joining’ of people to the Israelites appears to be an aspect of *restoration*. This is all the

Unlike the explanation of Israel's sifting, Amos does not clarify how, or on what basis, some of the nations survive the judgment announced earlier in the book. The analogue of early Israel at Sinai accepting the divine designation of YHWH's people, modified by the assertion in chapter 9 that in the eschatological future YHWH will purge sinners from his people, allows us to suggest that the nations that come under the sway of renewed Israel will have gone through a similar purging.

Amos's placement in the Twelve, finally, creates significant tensions with the books immediately preceding and following it. Indeed, within the first four books, only Amos clearly presents the possibility that some non-Israelite nations would abandon their habitual aggression against Israel/Judah, and especially their autonomy in the face of YHWH's universal sovereignty, in favor of a radically new posture toward both. By contrast, within the chosen optic and conceptual world of the books around Amos, the nations are predominantly or entirely incorrigible (Joel, Obadiah) or largely irrelevant (Hosea). Such differences will occupy us at the end of our survey of the Twelve.⁵⁸

more significant given that in other texts, it was precisely restoration that involved the *punishment* of the foreign nations (Isa. 11:13–16; Ps. 137:7–9)" (140, emphasis original).

58 See Schart, "The First Section," for further suggestions on how Amos coheres with the rest of the Twelve.

The Nations in Obadiah

While Hosea stands out within the Twelve as the only book without an oracle against a foreign nation, Obadiah is notable for consisting almost entirely of oracles against Edom and the nations. Even the oracle of deliverance for Judah/Jerusalem in Obad 19–21 is cast predominantly in terms of taking possession of territories until then under the control of others, so that it is almost in equal part an oracle of destruction against those non-Israelite groups. Obadiah is also remarkable for the force and scope of its perspective on the nations, which leaves little if any place for their deliverance.

5.1 Terminology

5.1.1 *Proper Nouns for Groups*

The connection of various people groups with their land is very important in Obadiah because of its focus on the expatriation of Judahites in the past and the future undoing of the same by retributive expatriation of her oppressors. A variety of proper nouns refer to ethnic groups indirectly¹ by means of the city/nation-states that they inhabit: Edom (1, 8); Esau (co-referential with Edom; 6; with *הר* in 8, 9, 19, 21; with *בית* in 18); Mount Esau (co-referential with Edom; 8, 9, 19, 21); Teman (at least partially co-referential with Edom; 9); house of Esau (co-referential with Edom; 18 [2x]); and Philistines (19).

5.1.2 *Cities and Regions*

In some cases, territories in Obadiah are or will be without inhabitant, at least until Judahites finally reinhabit them. The following proper nouns probably refer to a region rather than to its population (details will be discussed below), and are all objects of the verb *ירש*: territory of Ephraim (19); territory of Gilead (19); land of the Canaanites (20); Zarephath (20, as the northern limit of the territory to be possessed by Israel's exiles); Sepharad (20, probably Sardes in

¹ This distinction can be subtle and is sometimes difficult to establish with certainty, but it is worth pursuing in Obadiah given the focus on territory in 19–21 over against the focus on people and their actions in 1–18.

Asia Minor;² as a place of exile of Judeans); and cities of the Negeb (20, as the southern limit of the territory to be possessed by Jerusalem's exiles).

5.1.3 גוי-Language, עם-Language, and Related Terms

Obadiah consistently uses הגוים for the nations around Edom, whether as agents who will attack her (1) or as her general setting (2). When the book's perspective broadens, Edom remains terminologically distinct from 'all the nations' (בל-הגוים, 15, 16) but shares their fate. The relationship between verses 15 and 16 seems to require seeing Edom as part of the nations, since its punishment (in the second person singular in verse 15) is explained in 16b as 'all the nations shall drink continually' (this difficult passage is discussed below). Obadiah reserves עם-language for Judah, and it appears only in 13 (singular, with a 1cs suffix referring to YHWH).

5.1.4 Generic Terms

Obadiah also attests a number of generic terms for non-Israelite groups, but a distinction between Edom and others often remains apparent. In verse 7, 'allies' (אנשי בריתך), 'those at peace with you' (אנשי שלמדך), and '[those who eat] your bread' (לחמך) depict groups other than Edom who despite their common cause and fellowship with Edom are treacherous, plotting Edom's destruction in a covert way that parallels the overt intention to make war against her in the opening verse (1). In verse 11, a distinction is again present between Edom who stood aloof and the strangers (זרים) and foreigners (נכרים) who plundered and took possession of Jerusalem.

Several generic groups are also present within Edom. Edom's 'wise men' (חכמים) and those with understanding (תבונה) in Mount Esau (8) contrast ironically with the preceding description of Edom in verse 7, according to which it has not perceived any of the hypocrisy of the nations with whom it has made common cause (אין תבונה בו). Similarly, verse 9 warns that despite the presence of 'mighty men' (גבורים) in Teman, everyone in Mount Esau will fall in a slaughter.

5.2 Characteristics of the Nations

Since Edom is the nearly-exclusive focus of the oracles of Obadiah, its characterization is by far the most detailed. Here we will note its characteristics

2 See E. Lipinski, "Obadiah 20," VT 23 (1973): 368–70.

and then its fate, understanding the relationship between the two as cause and effect.

5.2.1 *Characterization of Edom*

There is no shortage of negative characteristics for Edom in Obadiah. The list includes dispositions like pride (3), self-deceit (3) and the assumption that it is unassailable (3) as well as actions, all of which are related to its merciless treatment of her relative Judah (10–14). These actions toward Judah are summarized as ‘violence’ (חַמָּס, 10), and Edom is compared to the nations who pillaged and took possession of Jerusalem even though her actual role in that event was at most secondary (11).

The list of prohibitions or condemnations in verses 12–14 is a mix of attitudes and actions that detail Edom’s violence against Judah mentioned in verses 10–11. Edom is warned against or, as is more likely, condemned for having gloated, rejoiced, or boasted over Judah’s fall (12), entered and looted Judah (13), and killed or handed over Judahites who were fleeing the invading army (14). While the aspect of these verbs varies (some actions are clearly complete, others possibly ongoing), they all highlight behavior that is the antithesis of the solidarity and mutual care that should characterize extended family relationships as conceived of by the HB.³

The final Edomite offense mentioned in Obadiah is in some way the culmination of Edom’s involvement in Jerusalem’s fall: the celebratory drink that represents the completion of military action against Judah and the profit and joy that Edom drew from it (Obad 16).⁴ It is in this section that Edom’s identity is significantly modified by including her in the larger group of the nations. While it remains clear that Obadiah treats Edom as one of the nations when it assigns to both the common fate of destruction in the Day of YHWH, that shift in Obadiah is sometimes judged clumsy and taken as evidence of thematic incoherence. It is therefore worth examining Obad 15–16 closely because the foundation for the common fate of Edom and the other nations is laid there.⁵

3 See L. Perdue, “The Israelite and Early Jewish Family: Summary and Conclusions,” in *Families in Ancient Israel* (ed. C. Meyers et al.; The Family, Religion, and Culture; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 163–222, esp. 166–67.

4 Among the rather sparse evidence, wine was consumed during special royal celebrations at Mari, and there is iconographic evidence of Assurbanipal celebrating his defeat of the Elamite king Teumman by drinking wine in his royal garden. M. Tengberg, “Fruit-Growing,” in *A Companion to the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East* (ed. D.T. Potts; London: Blackwell, 2012), 188–89.

5 Cf. E. Assis, “Structure, Redaction and Significance in the Prophecy of Obadiah,” *JSOT* 39.2 (2014): 209–221, esp. 210–215, regarding the relation between the two sections. Assis identifies

Obadiah 15 opens a new section, leaving behind the specific prohibitions of 12–14. At the same time, the יָד at the beginning of verse 15 implies that there is a link between Edom's mistreatment of Judah and the Day of YHWH which will soon strike all the nations. This link, which should probably not be attributed to redaction,⁶ is made explicit in the *lex talionis* statement which uses second-person singular grammar throughout verse 15: "As you have done, it will be done to you; your recompense will return on your head." Verse 16, however, shifts to second-person plural grammar, and then to the third-person: "As you drank on my holy mountain, so all the nations will drink continually; they will drink and swallow and will be as though they were not."

This shift in grammatical person complicates interpretation of this section, to say the least. While it is beyond doubt that Edom is addressed in verse 15, the addressee in verse 16a could be Jerusalem (on the view that she drank briefly from the cup of YHWH's wrath), Edom (on the view that she remains the subject of the announcement of retribution), or the nations (if the focus shifts to those who were directly responsible for Jerusalem's fall).

The structure of Obad 15–16 offers a helpful point of departure for a closer look at this question:

15a The Day of YHWH against all the nations is near

15b What Edom did will be done to her

15c Edom's recompense will return on her head

16a As [?] drank on YHWH's mountain,

16b so all the nations will drink continually

16c The nations will drink, swallow, and cease to exist

The structure is roughly concentric, with two statements of the consequences for Edom (15b, c) and the nations (16b, c). The *Numeruswechsel* is indeed challenging, but should be evaluated in light of the clear link between verses 12–14 and verse 15, which presents the Day of YHWH as a reasonable ground for the preceding claim that Edom should not have behaved as it did on the day of its brother Jacob. On this view, the day of Edom's punishment is associated with

1–14 + 15b and 15a + 16–21 as distinct sections which were composed, respectively, shortly after Jerusalem's destruction and during a period of Edomite encroachment subsequent to 539.

6 This is also recognized by E. Ben Zvi, *A Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah* (BZAW 242; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996), 165. J. Renkema too sees no evidence of redaction here, *Obadiah* (trans. B. Doyle; HCOt; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 185.

that of the nations (cf. Isaiah 13), and by implication Edom here becomes a representative—a metonymical figure of speech—for all the nations.⁷

This contextual association of Edom with the nations makes it less likely that 16a refers to Judah.⁸ A much stronger argument against the suggestion that the 2mp ‘you’ of 16a addresses Judah is the fact that nowhere else in Obadiah is Judah referred to in the second person (singular or plural). Since the nations other than Edom are never addressed in the second person by Obadiah either, the discursive world established by the consistent deixis of the book should only be dismissed in the face of overwhelming evidence, which is lacking here.⁹ To this should be added the semantic and grammatical parallelism between 15a and 16a, and the fact that throughout the book Edom/Esau is routinely addressed in the second person (usually singular).¹⁰

The evidence thus weighs in favor of seeing the plural ‘you’ of 16a as addressed to Edom (or, perhaps, to Edom and the nations more directly involved in Jerusalem’s destruction). Thus the assertion in 16b that ‘all the nations’ will receive their just recompense may well include Edom in that group (cf. 15a,b). If this is correct, while Edom/Esau appears a few more times in the book, it does so as one of the nations, no longer distinct from them on the basis of her genealogical tie to Judah but rather subject to judgment along with the other nations for her misdeeds.¹¹

5.2.2 *Fate of Edom*

The book’s presentation of Edom’s fate involves several interrelated actors: YHWH’s agency is primary (‘I’ in verses 2, 4), but includes the direct agency of non-Israelite nations other than Edom (1). The basis for divine punishment of Edom is most clearly its violence against Judah (10), detailed in 11–14. Ironically, just as Edom literally drank in celebration of Jerusalem’s downfall, so she and all nations will drink metaphorically from the cup of divine wrath (Lam 4:21;

7 Ben Zvi, *A Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah*, 169.

8 P. Raabe, *Obadiah* (AB 24D; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 203–204, and Renkema, *Obadiah*, 190–92, understand the plural ‘you’ to refer to Judah, and thus see the drinking in the first line of verse 16 as metaphorical.

9 *Numeruswechsel* in the case of Edom/Esau (2cs, 3ms) occurs in verses 3, 7, but the second-person grammar predominates.

10 Judah is almost always spoken of in the third person (‘her,’ 1; ‘him’ or ‘his,’ 11, 12, 13, 14; ‘my people,’ 13, and ‘they,’ 18, plus various titles). The ‘we’ of verse 1 may include Judah; see Raabe, *Obadiah*, 113, and contrast Jer 49:14.

11 Assis, “Structure, Redaction and Significance,” reaches the same conclusions regarding 15a, 16–21 (218). Assis’s article is an excellent example of using synchronic/holistic and diachronic/compositional approaches synergistically.

Isa 51:17–23; Jer 25:15–19; 49:7–12; Ezek 23:31–34).¹² Since Edom and the nations have wronged YHWH by wronging Judah, the theological basis of this punishment explains YHWH's agency as the one who will punish Edom's wrongdoing. This is certain in light of the 'I' that expresses YHWH's action against Edom (2, 4, 8) and in the consistently divine agency that drives the events of the Day of YHWH (15–18).

The nature of Edom's fate is multifaceted, and is portrayed in terms of its military efforts (defeat, 7), its international relations (unimportance, 2; shame, 2, 10; abasement, 4), its possession of territory (exile, 7), and especially its life and perpetuity (destruction, 5, 8; pillaging, 6; slaughter, 9; being permanently cut off, 10; stubble consumed by fire so that no survivor remains, 18). Obadiah's descriptions of Edom's destruction are clearly superlative, but do not always entail complete destruction. Edom's continued existence is even presupposed by her being small and utterly despised among the nations (2) and in the images of thieves who do not completely empty the house they rob and of grape gatherers who leave gleanings (5–6). While other descriptions of her destruction seem to leave no remnant, these should probably be understood as hyperbole.

5.2.3 *Characterization of the Nations*

The nations other than Edom have also done things the author of Obadiah strongly condemns, especially initiating the military actions against Judah while Edom either stood by and watched or assisted. Still, the author gives much less space to their characterization and to the description of their fate, an interesting emphasis that nevertheless disappears when Edom is absorbed into the category of the nations in verse 16.¹³

The first role assigned to the nations other than Edom is that of an instrument of divine punishment against Edom (1). It is presumably these nations that destroy from Edom its sages and, indeed, every other inhabitant (8–9). Similarly, it is nations other than Edom that undertook the conquest of Judah and Jerusalem, and even this does not compel the author to explicitly condemn them. Although they carried off Jerusalem's wealth, their actions are

¹² See esp. Raabe, *Obadiah*, 206–42.

¹³ The absorption of Edom into the category of 'the nations' suggests that Wellhausen's suggestion that 15a and 15b be transposed to sharpen the contrast between the Edom and nations sections in fact obscures a significant semantic development in the book; J. Wellhausen, *Die Kleinen Propheten übersetzt und erklärt* (4th ed.; Berlin: Reimer, 1963). It is also without empirical support, as noted by A. Gelston (ed.), *The Twelve Minor Prophets* (BHQ 13; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2010), 91*.

the basis for a comparison that reflects unfavorably on *Edom*. Such actions are clearly wrong, but the author reserves his condemnation of the nations for the book's penultimate section in which all the nations, including Edom, will be judged in the Day of YHWH.

5.2.4 *Fate of the Nations*

The fate of the nations other than Edom is addressed only in the latter portions of Obadiah, most clearly in verses 15–16. There the Day of YHWH is said to be bearing down on ‘all the nations,’ which seems to include Edom (the exclusive addressee until then). The only explicit description of the nations’ fate follows: “they will drink and swallow, and shall be as though they had never been.” As noted above with respect to Edom, this is an ironic transformation of the image of the nations’/Edom’s celebration atop Mount Zion after conquering Jerusalem into a still more intense (תמיד) metaphorical drinking from the cup of divine wrath.¹⁴ The outcome is portrayed as nothing less than their complete disappearance from the world scene.

Verses 17–18 present a conflict-based model for Judah’s repossession of her territory, although Judah confronts only Edom rather than all the nations (see also the discussion of verses 19–20 below). The nature of the conflict remains indistinct, but its outcome is quite clear: the houses of Jacob and Joseph will both ignite (דלק) and consume (אכל) Edom, with the result that there will not be a single survivor (לא־יהיה שריד).¹⁵

Complementing this opponent-focused perspective is the more territorially-focused material in verse 19–20. There are several reasons to think that the proper nouns in verses 19–20 refer primarily, if not exclusively, to territory rather than to the people inhabiting it. First, in the literary flow of the book, all ‘nations’ (understood as people groups, not geographical areas) have been removed from the scene by the destruction brought by the Day of YHWH in verses 15–18. Second, the verb ירש requires a human agent (explicit in the

14 Cf. the intensification of the idea of drinking in Ps 75:8[9]; Jer 51:39, 57.

15 J. Wöhrle’s reasons for suggesting that ‘escape’ (פליטה) in 17 expresses the possibility of deliverance for the nations are not convincing; see *Der Abschluss des Zwölfprophetenbuchs: Buchübergreifende Redaktionsprozesse in den späten Sammlungen* (BZAW 389; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 207–08. The inclusio formed by פליטה (17) and שריד (18) makes clear that no Edomites will survive, and especially since the common fate of both Edomites and other non-Israelites is very clear in 16, Edom’s fate in 17–18 cannot be different from that of the nations. The similar language in Joel 3:5 has a much wider referent both because that pericope announces no comprehensive destruction of the nations, and because of the corresponding affirmation that anyone who calls on YHWH will be delivered.

reference to Benjamin), but does not require that human beings be dispossessed, and so frequently refers instead to the possession of territory.¹⁶ The precise meaning of verse 20 is notoriously difficult to establish. Whether 20a ('the exiles of this host of the sons of Israel') is only the subject, and so parallel to 'exiles of Jerusalem at Sephrad,' or whether 20a includes a subject and object (more likely, since the idea of Judahite exiles in Canaan is hard to grasp), the overall sense clearly refers to the retaking of the full extent of the land by Judah's liberated exiles.

Together, verses 19–20 describe the re-establishment of Judahite control over what is essentially the territory controlled by Israel's united monarchy in the tenth century (cf. Amos 9:11–12). Verse 21 adds a significant twist by asserting that this restored kingdom will belong directly to YHWH.¹⁷ This same verse includes the last mention of a non-Israelite place or group, and while the root שפט always involves adjudicating between or ruling humans, it is not clear that the objects of the verb must be ethnically Edomite.

5.3 Analysis

5.3.1 *Lexical Overlap or Distinction between Israel/Judah and the Nations*

Lexical distinctions between Judah and Edom/the nations are the norm in Obadiah. This is true of proper nouns as well as more flexible terms like גוי and עם . The author of Obadiah seems to have used גוי and עם with care, using the former to refer only to non-Israelite entities and the latter to refer only to Judah.

With respect to proper nouns, it is striking that Edom is never mentioned in Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, while Obadiah (Amos and Malachi in far less striking ways) makes explicit reference to Edom/Esau nine times and focuses on it nearly from beginning to end.¹⁸ Conversely, A. Hagedorn has noted that

16 Gen 15:7; similarly 28:4; analogously the 'gates of [Israel's] enemies,' Gen 22:17; 24:60.

17 See J. Nogalski, "Not Just Another Nation: Obadiah's Placement in the Book of the Twelve," in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve. Methodological Foundations—Redactional Processes—Historical Insights* (ed. R. Albertz, J. Nogalski, and J. Wöhrle; BZAW 433; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 89–107, for an attempt to explain the relationship between Obadiah and Amos 9 by means of redaction and the use of source material. He suggests that "the entire act of compiling Obadiah owes its shape to Amos 9" (100). The absence of any Davidic element is noted by Ben Zvi, *A Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah*, 258.

18 B. Dicou, *Edom, Israel's Brother and Antagonist: The Role of Edom in Biblical Prophecy and Story* (JSOTSup 169; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 113–14.

in the Twelve generally, and particularly in Obadiah (which does not mention it at all), Babylon is much less prominent than in the rest of the biblical literature.¹⁹ He observes of Obadiah that

An event that left traces in almost all biblical books is carefully pushed into the background here and simply serves as the point of departure for an evaluation of Israel's relationship to Edom. In this process the role of Babylon remains completely unaddressed. This goes so far that Babylon is not even mentioned and [is] simply described as foreign.²⁰

This radical increase of Edom's prominence in the destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, complemented by the very unusual and nearly complete elimination of Babylon from the picture despite its historical relevance, puts the book's focus squarely on Edom. Even when the Day of YHWH widens the perspective to include the nations in verse 15, Edom retains its name rather than becoming anonymous ('house of Edom,' twice in v. 17; 'mountain of Edom' in vv. 19, 21).

This estrangement and antipathy coexist despite an historical fraternal relationship: Judah and Edom are brothers (נא, Obad 10, 12). Anderson describes the 'brother' terminology in Obad 18 and the geographical distance and distinction between Mount Zion and Mount Esau as "juxtaposed identities" that contribute to the contrasting futures of the two groups.²¹ To this one could add the contrast between the 'day' when Edom stood aloof and the 'day' of YHWH.²²

5.3.2 *Semantic Identity or Distinction of Israel/Judah and the Nations*

There is very little semantic overlap between Judah and the nations in Obadiah, and the little that is present has a largely ironic or paradoxical function in light of the coming role reversal that will see Judah reestablished and Edom destroyed.²³ This absence of overlap is particularly evident in the main theological axis of the book, the punishment of Edom and the nations

19 A. Hagedorn, "Diaspora or no Diaspora? Some Remarks on the Role of Egypt and Babylon in the Book of the Twelve," in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Twelve: Methodological Foundations—Redactional Processes—Historical Insights* (ed. R. Albertz, J. Nogalski, and J. Wöhrle; BZAW 433; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 319–36 (323–24).

20 Hagedorn, "Diaspora or no Diaspora?," 324.

21 B.A. Anderson, "Poetic Justice in Obadiah," *JSOT* 35 (2010): 247–55.

22 This is suggested by G.S. Ogden, "Prophetic Oracles against Foreign Nations and Psalms of Communal Lament: The Relationship of Psalm 137 to Jeremiah 49:7–22 and Obadiah," *JSOT* 24 (1982): 89–97 (92).

23 See J.J. Krause, "Tradition, History, and Our Story: Some Observations on Jacob and Esau in the Books of Obadiah and Malachi," *JSOT* 32 (2008): 475–86, esp. 478–81.

that simultaneously liberates and restores Judah to her homeland. Edom in particular, and the non-Israelite nations in general, have committed a variety of offenses against Judah and Jerusalem that make them guilty in YHWH's eyes. These include trust "in topography rather than divine power," an attempt to "trespass the limitations of human existence," and resultant opposition to YHWH.²⁴ Even though the HB typically presents Judah's fate as punishment for its own sins, Obadiah makes no mention of Judahite guilt.

However, some ironic or deconstructed overlap between Judah and non-Israelite nations occurs on part of the theological axis just mentioned: ownership and residence in territories that the HB holds to be historically Israelite. After the fall of Jerusalem, apart from the small number of socially marginal persons who remained in the land, Judeans were dispossessed of their territory and its inhabitants increasingly came from non-Israelite polities. This geographical overlap sometimes has a chronological facet as well. While in some cases (e.g., verses 19–21) it appears that Israel will repossess territory devoid of inhabitants, Obad 18 presupposes a confrontation between the houses of Jacob and Joseph on the one hand and the house of Esau on the other. The order, as much logical as chronological, is thus (1) Judah has already been expelled (verses 11–14); (2) Edom and all those who inhabit historically Israelite territory will be destroyed (verses 15–16), presumably on historically Israelite territory (verse 18), and their territory inhabited (verses 17, 19–20); (3) Israel will once again inhabit its territory (verse 20); (4) YHWH's kingdom will be fully established (verse 21).

This sequence treats almost synoptically the possession-dispossession-repossession cycle in order to contrast Edom and the nations with Judah. The contrast is most clearly present in the transitive concept of dispossessing as expressed by derivatives of ירש that pepper Obad 17–20. The house of Jacob will 'possess (ירש) its possessions (מושרים)' (17), a thought given significant geographical detail in verses 19–20, which use ירש-language three times and elide the verb at least as many times. The key element of this reversal is its permanence. While Edom and the nations infiltrated and controlled Israelite territory for a time, Judah will take permanent possession of its territory under the indomitable kingship of YHWH (verse 21).

The only non-ironic semantic overlap between Israel and Edom derives from the fact that Israel/Judah and Edom are blood relatives (verses 10, 12).²⁵

24 As shown by Ben Zvi, *A Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah*, 46–71 (here I cite the summary on 250).

25 For arguments in favor of sociopolitical motivation, rather than shared genetic descent, at the heart of this claim, see J.M. Tebes, "You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite, for He is Your

The moral characterization outlined above is intensified by the fact that Edom has wronged not just any group, but one with whom she shares a common ancestry. This blood tie exacerbates Edom's guilt, and does nothing to alleviate her punishment at the hands of YHWH and of Judah alike. While Esau was simply non-elect, his descendants act as the anti-elect, and so no longer participate in or benefit from the divine plan of blessing the world through Jacob's line.²⁶ This diachronic shift, known from other passages in the HB, also illuminates the relation of Edom to the nations, since the descendants linked to Esau act increasingly like one of the nations rather than like Judah's kin.²⁷

5.4 Conclusions

The nations theme in Obadiah is almost entirely static in terms of characterization: Edom and the other nations remain guilty from the recent past until the future day of punishment, with no possibility of repentance. Two dynamic temporal facets appear within this larger paradigm: Edom becomes very closely associated with the nations in the context of the future Day of YHWH, and the nations and Edom will both be punished in the future. Throughout this chronological progression Israel/Judah and the nations remain hermetically separate with the exception that Edom's genetic roots intertwine with Judah's.

Obadiah's treatment of the nations theme is characterized by the use of binary categories and absolute terminology. The nations, and Edom in particular, have in their role as Judah's enemy irrevocably exposed themselves to divine wrath, which will soon lead to their complete destruction. There is no possibility of repentance, their destruction is not partial or limited, and they disappear from the scene when the book sketches the eschatological consummation.²⁸

Brother': The Tradition of Esau and the Edomite Genealogies from an Anthropological Perspective," *JHS* 6 (2006): article 6. On Genesis 36, see J. Bartlett, "Edom in the Non-Prophetic Corpus," in *You Shall Not Abhor an Edomite for He Is Your Brother: Edom and Seir in History and Tradition* (ed. D.V. Edelman; SBLABS 3; Atlanta: Scholars, 1995), 13–21, esp. 19.

26 Here I draw on some insights offered by J.S. Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Doctrine of Election* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 107–36.

27 This is also recognized by Ben Zvi, *A Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Obadiah*, 230.

28 The only possible counter-indication is the reference to the mountain of Esau in verse 21. If it refers to Edomites, however, one must explain not only how they escaped what is evidently a definitive judgment, but also how they can exist in what is now YHWH's fully established kingdom when he committed to undoing them (verses 2, 4).

The presentation of Judah/Israel is no less absolute. Judah's sins, although perhaps presupposed, play no explicit role in the events that the book describes. Accordingly, Judah has nothing to fear, and everything to gain, from YHWH's future intervention. Indeed, she can, without guilt, take up the adversarial role that until now (per Obadiah) was held only by the nations and Edom, and so participate in the destruction of Edom and the other nations who have taken possession of her territory. The book's future horizon is thus one of a world purged of non-Israelites and so composed only of a restored Israel. While formally this binary perspective can be traced back to the binary covenantal election of Jacob rather than of Esau, it attains the significance that it has in Obadiah only through the reality of Edom's deep-seated, permanent opposition to YHWH and his elect covenant partner.

The factors most commonly mentioned as a basis for seeing a lack of coherence in the nations-theme are the shift from a focus on Edom in 1–14 to a more global perspective in 15–21, or a shift from Judah's current hardship to its future elevation.²⁹ From the above discussion it is clear that there is development, and even transformation, of various elements of the nations-theme, principally concerning Edom. However, our findings caution against the facile acceptance of these significant dynamics as convincing evidence of thematic incoherence. In the same vein, E. Assis has argued that while there are several discernable chronological perspectives in the various parts of Obadiah, each section complements the others without contradiction.³⁰

While the unity of the book as a whole lies beyond the scope of this investigation, the evidence for the unity of the nations-theme, which is surely the book's dominant theme, argues for a reevaluation of the formal elements that are often taken as proof of its semantic incoherence.³¹ While Obadiah's treatment of the nations makes any smooth sequential reading of the theme across the Twelve difficult, it is not clear that the nations were a prominent feature in the organization of the collection. Thus the variety to which Obadiah contributes may simply constitute a full-orbed perspective on Israel and the nations that involves present and future, real/ideal, and other facets variously picked up by one or another of the books that make up the Twelve.

29 See Nogalski, "Not Just Another Nation," 99–100 and the literature he cites.

30 Assis, "Structure, Redaction and Significance."

31 E.g., Nogalski, "Not Just Another Nation," *passim*.

The Nations in Jonah

Although it is clear that the nations-theme is second to none in the book of Jonah, there is widespread disagreement regarding its precise contours and its relation to other themes in the book. Some see in the book a tolerant, inclusive approach to religious diversity in which the sailors remain polytheists and the penitent Ninevites are fully forgiven for their wrongs.¹ Others affirm that the Ninevites' repentance was merely superficial while the sailors' repentance was authentic, a polarity that would lead one to wonder with J. Jeremias if "die Völkerwelt dann mit Jona 1 und 3 in eine gut . . . und in eine schuldige, gerichts-reife Hälfte aufgeteilt [ist]?"² Its location within the Twelve raises further questions: if Nineveh repented in a meaningful way, as Jon 3:10 seems to affirm, how should one understand the radically different perspective on Nineveh and Assyria that the book of Nahum presents?³ Further, how can the interpreter relate Jonah's exceptional presentation of the nations as corrigible and an Israelite prophet as incorrigible to the quite different perspectives on the nations in the present elsewhere in the Twelve?⁴

This chapter will first summarize the language used to refer to the different groups of non-Israelites in Jonah, then compare and contrast their characterizations in order to determine the degree of diversity present in the

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- 1 See H. Gervarhahu, "The Universalism of the Book of Jonah," *Dor le Dor* 10 (1981): 20–27; of the Ninevites, see E. Levine, "Justice in Judaism: the case of Jonah," *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 5 (2002): 170–97 (178).
 - 2 J. Jeremias, "Die Sicht der Völker im Jonabuch (Jona 1 und Jona 3)," in *Gott und Mensch im Dialog: Festschrift für Otto Kaiser zum 80. Geburtstag* (ed. M. Witte; BZAW 345; 2 vols.; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 2:555–67 (563).
 - 3 The book of Jonah sets its events in the time of Jonah ben Amittai (2 Kgs 14:25), thus in the mid-eighth century. The date of its composition is another question entirely, and need not be settled here.
 - 4 This is helpfully explored by A. Schart, "The Jonah-Narrative within the Book of the Twelve," in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve. Methodological Foundations—Redactional Processes—Historical Insights* (ed. R. Albertz, J. Nogalski, and J. Wöhrle; BZAW 433; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 109–28, esp. 116–18.

nations-theme in Jonah. It will then reflect on the various questions that arise when one tries to read Jonah as part of the Twelve.⁵

6.1 Terminology

6.1.1 *Nineveh/Assyria*

Nineveh lies at the center of the Jonah narrative, and is the most frequently attested term in the book that designates non-Israelites. In addition to the proper noun (1:2; 3:2, 3 [*bis*], 4, 5, 6, 7; 4:11), references to the same include 'the great city' (העיר הגדולה, 1:2; 3:2; 4:11), the city 'great to God' (עיר גדולה לאלהים, 3:3), and simply 'the city' (4:5). Several times the book mentions one or more of its inhabitants, from the ruler (מלך נינוה, 3:6) and his nobles (גדליו, 3:7) down to the ordinary people of Nineveh (אנשי נינוה, 3:5). The whole population is later described as 'those who do not know their right from their left' (4:11).

6.1.2 *גוי-Language, עם-Language, and Related Terms*

Probably due to the prominence of the proper noun נינוה, there is no occurrence of גוי in Jonah. The one use of עם, in the sailors' question to Jonah, "From what people are you?" (1:8), does not figure in the book's treatment of non-Israelites either.

6.1.3 *Geographical Language*

The only geographically specific location other than Nineveh that lies outside Israel/Judah is Tarshish, mentioned in 1:3 (*bis*); 4:2. Since the term in Jonah refers only to a destination far from Israel (probably in Spain) and not to a people group, it is of no significance for our exploration of the nations. Although unusual, the sea should be mentioned here as the setting in which, far from the land of Israel, non-Israelite sailors make a radical commitment to YHWH God of Israel.

6.1.4 *Other Language*

The sailors are without identification apart from their vocation (מלח, only in 1:5; the captain is רב החבל in 1:6). This group of non-Israelites is given no further description, and masculine plural pronouns or the generic אנשים (1:10, 13, 16) are the sole means used to refer to them in the rest of the chapter. Their

5 Various parts of this discussion develop an earlier investigation along slightly different lines: D. Timmer, "Jonah's Theology of the Nations: The Interface of Religious and Ethnic Identity," *RevB* 120 (2013): 13–23, which I draw on here with permission.

different religious affiliations are made explicit in the statement that in distress ‘each one prayed to his own god’ (1:5). The prophet’s reference to ‘those who regard useless idols’ (2:9) most likely refers to the sailors as well.

6.2 Characteristics

6.2.1 *Nineveh as a Uniquely Wicked City*

From the outset two characteristics of Nineveh are emphasized: its significance in God’s eyes (עיר גדולה לאֱלֹהִים) and its wickedness (רעה), which has made his punishment unavoidable (Jon 1:2). The importance of Nineveh for the Assyrian empire during the period in which Jonah is set is well-known, deriving from its palace and temples as well as its sizable population, which is referred to twice in the book (3:3b; 4:11) and probably lies behind the description of Nineveh as being ‘three days’ walk.’⁶ The city clearly stands *pars pro toto* for the Neo-Assyrian empire.

Assyria’s unusually violent and brutal treatment of rebellious populations in the empire is well documented in its literary and visual media. Royal inscriptions regularly describe the violent defeat of the empire’s foes, while palace reliefs depicted in graphic detail the varied fates of its conquered opponents.⁷ The imperialistic sponsorship of this media reminds us that Assyria’s cruelty was a means to an end rather than an inherent Assyrian trait. It was at the same time probably not purely pragmatic, and Zehnder contends that Assyria’s upper echelons regarded the non-Assyrian ‘other’ as less than human and were consequently more likely to authorize and encourage acts of cruelty against them than if they had viewed the ‘other’ as no less human than themselves.⁸

6 Cf. H.W.F. Saggs, *The Might That Was Assyria* (Sidgwick & Jackson Great Civilizations Series; London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1984), 188–92. Since Nineveh never attained anything near this size (if one takes the statement literally), and more importantly since no other ancient Near Eastern text uses the phrase to describe a city’s physical size, this description almost certainly means the largest conceivable city (cf. Gen 30:36; Exod 3:18). Cf. D. Marcus, “Nineveh’s ‘Three Days’ Walk’ (Jonah 3:3): Another Interpretation,” in *On the Way to Nineveh* (ed. S.L. Cook and S.C. Winter; ASOR Books 4; Atlanta: Scholars, 1999), 42–53.

7 J. Reade, “Religious Ritual in Assyrian Sculpture,” in *Ritual and Politics in Ancient Mesopotamia* (ed. B.N. Porter; AOS 88; New Haven 2005), 7–61 (20). See the extensive surveys of the relevant material in F.M. Fales, *Guerre et paix en Assyrie: Religion et impérialisme* (Les Conférences de l’École Pratique des Hautes Études; Paris: Cerf, 2010), and M. Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden in Israel und Assyrien: Ein Beitrag zur Anthropologie des ‘Fremden’ im Licht antiker Quellen* (BWANT 168; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2005).

8 Zehnder, *Umgang mit Fremden in Israel und Assyrien*, 546, 554.

Surprisingly, the city's king/ruler confirms Nineveh's participation in the empire's characteristically violent imperialism (3:8).⁹ Accepting Jonah's condemnation of the city's behavior, he urges the Ninevites to repent of their violent lifestyle.¹⁰ It is surprising that despite the overtly theological nature of Assyria's imperialism, the author of Jonah never explicitly condemns it.¹¹ This choice probably sharpened his focus on the city's morality by eliminating the empire's ideology as its matrix, while bypassing the theological aspects of Assyrian imperial violence allowed him to omit an explicit theological shift from his description of Nineveh's repentance.

6.2.2 *The Sailors as Non-Israelites who Begin to Revere YHWH*

Although the sailors of Jonah 1 possess no ethnic or national identity other than their apophatic description as non-Israelite, their religious identity is described in detail. At the beginning of the episode the sailors are predictably theistic, and when the ship is threatened by the storm, their distress contrasts with the hope that their gods will save them (1:5).¹²

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- 9 The term 'king' may refer to a local ruler or to a substitute king, as was the case in Nineveh in 678; see S. Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal*, part 1, *Texts* (AOAT 5/1; Kevelaer and Neukirchen-Vluyn: Butzon und Bercker and Neukirchener Verlag, 1970), xxviii, 516.
- 10 See Job 16:17; Isa 59:6 for the collocation of חַמַּס with כָּף as violent character and behavior. The royal call to repentance issued in 793 BCE by an unnamed Assyrian ruler and addressed to Mannu-ki-Assur, the governor of Guzana/Gozan province, is an intriguing analogue: "Decree of the king. You and all the people, your land, your meadows will mourn and pray for three days before the god Adad and repent. You will perform the purification rites so that there may be rest." J. Friedrich et al., *Die Inschriften vom Tell Halaf. Keilschrifttexte und aramäische Urkunden aus einer assyrischen Provinzhauptstadt* (Beiheft zum Archiv für Orientforschung 6; Berlin: Biblio Verlag, 1940), 13f, no. 5, cited in D. Wiseman, "Jonah's Nineveh," *TynBul* 30 (1979): 29–52 (51).
- 11 "Assyrian texts expound an imperial ideology claiming that Ashur was the pre-eminent deity who ruled over all the gods and, as a corollary, the political reality on earth should therefore be that all peoples acknowledged the sovereignty of Ashur's representative, the Assyrian king." S. Parpola, "National and Ethnic Identity in the Neo-Assyrian Empire and Assyrian Identity in Post-Empire Times," *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 18 (2004): 5–22 (13). S. Holloway, *Aššur is King! Aššur is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (CHANE 10; Leiden: Brill, 2001), identifies fifty-five cases, from Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076) to Assurbanipal (645 or later), in which Assyria brought captured gods to Assyria, and demonstrates that on rare occasions Assyrian kings would destroy the cult statues of gods whose people they conquered (*Aššur is King!*, 118–22).
- 12 Prayer to deity when in distress at sea is widely attested; see A.J. Brody, "Each Man Cried Out to His God": *The Specialized Religion of Canaanite and Phoenician Seafarers* (HSM 58;

Once they learn that the divine displeasure behind the storm is directed against Jonah, the sailors make every effort to avoid throwing him overboard (1:13). When the growing storm makes that impossible, they pray again, but this time their prayer is directed to YHWH. In it they give evidence that they have accepted Jonah's description of YHWH as an omnipotent and sovereign creator and judge, and they apparently abandon any hope that the gods to whom they prayed earlier would deliver them.¹³

The language used by the author of Jonah to describe the sailors' prayer very intentionally portrays their religious behavior as YHWHistic by putting on their lips passages from two psalms focused on YHWH's uniqueness and the impotence of other deities. As Wolff notes, "The sentence in Psalm 135:6 is explicitly related to Yahweh's free disposal over the sea. . . . In both psalms, the confession of faith contrasts Yahweh with other, impotent gods (135:5) and idols (115:4–7)."¹⁴ This prohibits the conclusion that the sailors were polytheists who simply added Yahweh to their pantheon.¹⁵ It is also important that the sailors recognize Yahweh's universal sovereignty before they learn that he will not hold them guilty for Jonah's death, and even before the storm has ended. Since their religious transformation is evident before they derive any personal benefit from it, it is more likely authentic than not.

This conclusion is reinforced by the very positive description of their behavior after the storm. First, their 'reverence for Yahweh' is emphasized: וִירָאוּ אֶת־יְהוָה. ¹⁶ This is almost without doubt a description of complete conversion to YHWHism. The phrase 'to fear/revere YHWH' in the Hebrew Bible consistently describes those in a genuine relationship with the God of Israel,¹⁷ and the sailors' sacrifices and vows in the same verse confirm

Atlanta: Scholars, 1998), 82–83. Note also the anchors in the Baal palace at Ugarit; cf. M. Yon, "Ugarit," in *OEANE* (ed. E.M. Meyers; 5 vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 5:255–62 (260).

13 "Die anderen Götter verlieren neben Jahwe ihre Funktion. Das Judentum wird zur Religion schlechthin," C. Levin, "Jona 1: Bekehrung zum Judentum und ihre Folgen," in *Die unwiderstehliche Wahrheit: Studien zur alttestamentlichen Prophetie* (ed. R. Lux and E.-J. Waschke; ABG 23; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2006), 283–99 (288).

14 H.W. Wolff, *Obadiah and Jonah: A Commentary* (trans. M. Kohl; CC; Minneapolis, 1986), 121.

15 Pace H. Gervarhahu, "Universalism," and Brody, "Each Man Cried Out to His God," 11 n. 9.

16 On the various meanings of יָרָא in Jonah 1, see R. Lux, *Jona: Prophet zwischen 'Verweigerung' und 'Gehorsam'* (FRLANT 162; Göttingen 1991), 101 n. 37, 112 n. 88. J. Magonet notes polysemy with other lexemes in Jonah, *Form and Meaning: Studies in Literary Techniques in the Book of Jonah* (BBET 2; Bern: Herbert Lang; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1976), 22–28.

17 See R.E. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 16; D. Sheriffs, *The Friendship of the LORD* (Carlisle: Paternoster,

this interpretation, attributing to them behaviors the Hebrew Bible habitually connects to a permanent commitment to YHWH (Ps 50:14; Isa 19:21).¹⁸

Psalms 50 affirms the propriety of vows and sacrifices offered by a worshiper whose behavior is in accord with YHWH's will (Ps 50:23), and simultaneously warns Israelites whose behavior is inconsistent with their religious profession (50:16–20). The eschatological restoration of Egypt described in Isa 19:16–25 also envisions Israel's ancient enemies performing vows and sacrifices.¹⁹ The use of intertextual material that elsewhere describes *Israelites* who were in an authentic relationship with YHWH to describe the *sailors* very clearly includes them among those who genuinely revere YHWH. This emphatic description of the sailors' religious change also sharply contrasts them with Jonah, as Lux observes:

Der Erzähler stellt dem hebräischen Propheten, der sich Gottes Wort verschließt, Nichtisraeliten gegenüber, die sich dem Gott Israels im Gebet öffnen, seine Rechts- und Kultterminologie zu der ihren machen (v. 14) und schließlich zu Teilnehmen am Kultgeschehen werden (v. 16).²⁰

6.2.3 *Nineveh as a Repentant City*

The Ninevites who heard Jonah's message are said to have promptly "believed in God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them" (3:5). While it has sometimes been thought that 'believing in God' requires a radical theological shift, the syntagm Hifil אָמַן with ב marking the object possesses a wide semantic range. When a message from God is in view, the sense is bounded on the one side by its use with Abraham (Gen 15:6) and

1996) 162–64, concludes that "The spirituality of the 'fear of the Lord' is both the deep inward orientation and its practical outcome in behavior" (164; similarly 92–93).

18 These passages share with Jon 1:16 several rare collocations involving זָבַח (nominal or verbal forms), נָדַר (nominal and verbal forms), and שָׁלַם (verbal only), although not every passage attests every element.

19 "The language of Isa 19:20–21 appears to have been consciously chosen to demonstrate that Egypt will share the same kind of relationship with the Lord as Israel did." J. Oswalt, *Isaiah* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003) 243. Similarly, H. Wildberger, *Isaiah* 13–27 (trans. T. Trapp; CC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 276–77.

20 Lux, *Jona*, 121. In the context of the book this contrast is often ironic: note Jonah's erroneous contrast of himself as Yahwistic with the sailors as "those who regard vain idols [and] forsake their faithfulness" (2:8[9]).

on the other by its use with Judah (2 Chron 20:20).²¹ The context of Jonah 3 requires that the phrase at least include the Ninevites' belief that Jonah's message was true.²² The author adds that, in YHWH's opinion, the Ninevites 'turned from their evil way' (Jon 3:10), a phrase that consistently describes the kind of repentance that God called for.²³

While the primary focus of Jonah 3 is on Nineveh's population as a whole, it also gives significant attention to its ruler/king. It was a significant step for this ruler to take seriously the prophet of an unknown deity, even if heeding Jonah's message does not manifest clear distrust in the protection afforded by the primary Assyrian gods (especially Ishtar) to the monarch and those who served him.²⁴ The 'fear not' that was characteristic of prophetic addresses to Neo-Assyrian monarchs of the seventh century²⁵ made clear the Assyrian deities' commitment to the wellbeing of the empire, and would have been an encouragement to regional rulers and monarchs alike.²⁶ Moreover, the 'covenant of Assur' was addressed to the Assyrian populace, and connected their wellbeing to that of the king: "[List]en, O Assyrians! [The king] has vanquished his enemy. [You]r [king] has put his enemy [under] his foot . . . Assur has given the totality of the four regions to him."²⁷ The response of Nineveh's ruler to Jonah's message complicates his religious identity by adding some measure of respect for the אֱלֹהִים of whom Jonah spoke. This change is complemented by classic signs of repentance as the king arises from his throne to sit down in ashes and replaces his royal regalia with sackcloth.

21 For אִם־ with the preposition כִּי and God as the grammatical object in response to divine miracles, see Exod 14:31; Num 14:11; 20:12; Deut 1:32; Ps 78:22. For the phrase's description of a response to the divine word, see Gen 15:6 (God as object); Deut 9:23 (God as object; the parallel line has קָל as the object of שָׁמַע); 2 Kgs 17:14 (God as object, in parallel with stiffening one's neck); 2 Chron 20:20 (God as object); Ps 106:12, 24 (God's word as object in both cases); 119:66 (God's commandments as object). For the use of the phrase with a variety of objects other than God, see the comprehensive overview in A. Jepsen, "אִם־," *TDOT* 1:298–309.

22 Levin, "Jona 1," 283–84.

23 Cf. 1 Kgs 13:33; 2 Kgs 17:13; 2 Chron 7:14; Jer 23:32; 25:5; 35:15; 36:3; Ezek 13:22; 33:11; Neh 9:35; Zech 1:4.

24 S. Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies* (SAA 9; Helsinki: University of Helsinki Press, 1997), xlvi.

25 Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, lxx.

26 For example, an oracle to Esarhaddon begins: "Esarhaddon, have no fear! I will put Assyria in order and reconcile the angry gods with Assyria." Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, 17, and Parpola's discussion of the reassurance formula, lxxiv–lxxvii, 22–27.

27 Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, 23.

As positive as these characteristics of Nineveh's response to Jonah's message are, they are not without implicit limits. While Nineveh's repentance is in line with what is contemplated in Jer 18:1–12, where others nations and Israel are both presented in the same paradigm of threatening and repentance, neither there nor in Jonah does this necessarily involve having one's sins pardoned or forgiven. Further, Jeremias and Lux both note that the descriptions of the sailors' response to Israel's God in Jonah 1 are not reused in the description of Nineveh's reaction in Jonah 3.²⁸

Contextual factors also favor a limited understanding of 'believing in God' here. In Jonah 3 Nineveh believed God's word through Jonah and abandoned its violence in the hope that God would spare it, but this is only a moral reform. J. Walton argues that "While one cannot deny the importance of proper works as a major step in repentance, this is not the terminology that would be expected of a full conversion to Yahweh," and this is verified by surveys of repentance in the Hebrew Bible.²⁹ Although fasting, mourning, cessation of violence, and belief in God's message transmitted by Jonah are explicitly part of Nineveh's response, it is significant that no mention is made of its putting away its gods.³⁰

Finally, if Jonah came to Nineveh in the decades before the fall of Israel, as the book assumes, then the Nineveh that repented under Jonah was soon involved once again in imperialistic violence, and that against the very nation from which Jonah came. Indeed, as Schart notes, biblical books nearly contemporary with the setting of Jonah (cf. 2 Kgs 14:25), or that can be dated between Jonah's setting and that of Nahum, present Nineveh as unrepentant (Hos 10:6; Mic 5:6).³¹ Such religious vacillation on Nineveh's part provides evidence from

28 Jeremias, "Die Sicht der Völker," 563; Lux, *Jona*, 201–202.

29 J. Walton, "The Object Lesson of Jonah 4:5–7 and the Purpose of the Book of Jonah," *BBR* 2 (1992): 47–57 (54). J. Chmiel similarly argues that repentance is made up of "(a) an external change in lifestyle that is easily noticeable and (b) an inner turning away from evil and towards God;" "The Semiotics of Repentance and Atonement in the Old Testament," *Analecta Cracoviensia* 25 (1993): 61–69; similarly J.A. Thompson and E. Martens, "שוב," *NIDOTTE* 4:55–59 (57).

30 Walton, "Object Lesson," 54 mentions the contrasting examples of Ruth and Naaman, both of whom explicitly abandon their gods and attach themselves to Yahweh (Ruth 1:16; 2 Kgs 5:17). L. Schmidt, *De Deo: Studien zur Literarkritik und Theologie des Buches Jona, des Gespräches zwischen Abraham und Jahwe in Genesis 18:22f. und von Hi 1* (BZAW 143; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1976), 84–86, and H. Gese, "Jona ben Amittai und das Jonabuch," *TBei* 16 (1985): 256–72, also note that Nineveh does not abandon her gods.

31 A. Schart, "Das Zwölfprophetenbuch als redaktionelle Großseinheit," *TLZ* 133 (2008): 227–46 (242).

elsewhere in the Twelve that the book of Jonah presents only a partial, temporary change on Nineveh's part.³²

Despite what is apparently a very nuanced presentation of Nineveh's reaction to Jonah's message, the book's conclusion none the less sees these events as enormously significant. This is especially clear in chapter 4, which describes God's actions in terms that echo Exod 34:6–7, a passage that depicts a critical moment in Israel's early relationship with YHWH.³³ It is important that neither Exodus 34 nor the adaptations of that text elsewhere in the HB include "any limiting element which would confine Yahweh's behavior to Israel."³⁴ Much more significant is the fact that Jonah 4 is the only pericope of the HB/OT in which this text is clearly applied to non-Israelites.³⁵ Finally, Jonah's realization that Yahweh 'relented concerning the threat' he had made accentuates the city's corrigibility, since in Exodus 34 God relented before Israel had repented, while in Jonah Nineveh's repentance precedes God's announcement that he will spare the city.³⁶

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- 32 Ryu observes that any change in behavior on the part of the Assyrian empire, which might have included "restoration of the foreign lands and peoples Nineveh had devastated," is absent from the book of Jonah; C.J. Ryu, "Silence as Resistance: A Postcolonial Reading of the Silence of Jonah in Jonah 4.1–11," *JSOT* 34 (2009): 195–218 (207).
- 33 As T. Dozeman observes, "Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Yahweh's Gracious and Compassionate Character," *JBL* 108 (1989): 207–23 (211).
- 34 Wolff, *Obadiah and Jonah*, 167. On the contrary, Exod 32:13, which quotes or alludes to Gen 15:7; 17:8; 22:17, suggests otherwise; see M. Widmer, *Moses, God, and the Dynamics of Intercessory Prayer: A Study of Exodus 32–34 and Numbers 13–14* (FAT 2:8; Tübingen; Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 113–19.
- 35 Noted by K. Dorn, "Israel und die Heiden-Völker," in *Christentum und nicht-christliche Religionen* (ed. H. Wagner; Konfessionskundliche Schriften des Johann-Adam-Möhler-Instituts 17; Paderborn: Bonifatius Verlag, 1991), 83–104 (89). Ps 145:8 may appear to be an exception, but is not as strongly formulated as the passage in Jonah 4 and, more importantly, anticipates rather than recounts the international propagation of Yahweh's gracious character; see W. VanGemeren, "Psalms," in *Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, vol. 5 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (ed. F. Gaebelin; 12 vols.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 861–62; H.-J. Kraus, *Psalms 60–150* (trans. H.C. Oswald; CC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 548.
- 36 The description of Israel's repentance begins in Exodus 33:4, and further develops in 33:5–6; cf. D.C. Timmer, *Creation, Tabernacle, and Sabbath: The Sabbath Frame of Exodus 31:12–17; 35:1–3 in Exegetical and Theological Perspective* (FRLANT 227, Göttingen 2009), 113–16.

6.3 Analysis

6.3.1 *Lexical Overlap or Separation of Jonah/Israel and Non-Israelites*

There is no lexical overlap between Jonah/Israel and either one of the non-Israelite groups in the book. Jonah emphasizes this by referring to himself first of all as a 'Hebrew' in distinction from the sailors, and the contrast continues until the very end of the book, when YHWH contrasts Jonah and his petulant irritation with the terrible punishment that had threatened Nineveh.³⁷

As for the Ninevites, the book never discusses them without clearly tying them to their city with either *עיר* or *נינוה*. On the level of terminology there is thus perfect consistency, even after their amorphous reaction to Jonah's message in chapter 3. The same is true of the sailors, who are introduced in 1:5 as *מלחים* and afterwards remain anonymous. The unbroken consistency of the lexical designations for each group provides a sharp contrast to their radically changing religious identities, and thus highlights what is surely the most dynamic element of the book's treatment of the non-Israelite nations.

6.3.2 *Semantic Overlap between Jonah and Non-Israelites*

Taking our cue from the prominence of Nineveh's 'wickedness' at the outset of the book, we can suggest that Jonah in chapter 1 is similarly unrepentant after his decision to head west rather than east in disobedience to a direct divine command. To the extent that chapter 2 describes some kind of repentance on Jonah's part, Jonah's characterization might be said to overlap with either that of the sailors or that of the Ninevites, the Ninevites clearly being the better parallel because of the ambiguous nature of their repentance. This is confirmed by chapter 4, which draws into question even the integrity of Jonah's decision in chapter 3 to submit to the divine will and proceed to Nineveh.

6.3.3 *Semantic Distinction between Jonah and Non-Israelites*

We have no reason to doubt Jonah's self-identification as a Hebrew (1:9), although his behavior before and after certainly makes his assertion that he 'reverses YHWH' difficult to accept.³⁸ We can therefore contrast Jonah's claim to 'revere YHWH, God of the heavens' with the narrator's statement that the

37 The frequency with which *עברי* ('Hebrew') distinguishes Israelites from non-Israelites (Abram, Gen 14:13; the Israelites vis-à-vis Egyptians throughout the first half of Exodus) underlies the contrast the term creates between Jonah and the sailors.

38 A. Thiselton, *The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) concludes that the prophet is a half-believer, holding '*beliefs that operate in some circumstances but not in others*' (31, emphasis original).

sailors not only ‘revered YHWH greatly’ (1:16) but also ‘offered a sacrifice and vowed vows’ (1:16). In the same way the narrator’s affirmation that Nineveh repented with repeated references to putting on sackcloth, reinforced by God’s recognition in 3:10 that they ‘turned from their wicked behavior,’ shows their sensitivity to the divine message in contrast to Jonah’s rejection of the same in chapters 1, 4. The sharpest semantic distinction between Jonah and the two groups of non-Israelites in the book therefore comes into view at the end of the book, after both non-Israelite groups have repented to one degree or another.

6.4 Conclusions

The book of Jonah explores with alacrity the religious transformation of not one but two non-Israelite groups. While it is easy for the author to maintain racial and other empirical differences between the sailors and Ninevites on the one hand and Jonah on the other, his master stroke is surely the inversion of the typical polarity of Israel as God-revering versus non-Israelites as ignorant of God (or worse). While at the outset both groups of non-Israelite were both doubtless ignorant of YHWH and committed to the worship of other gods, after moderate or even minimal intervention they make a partial or complete turn toward YHWH.

Since the book of Jonah is a narrative, the nations-theme is easy to trace. The two transformations of non-Israelites are described in some detail and have clear settings, even if there are important differences between them. Despite the coherence of the theme at the level of the book, however, interpretative problems arise when we consider it in the context of the Twelve, as Schart has observed.³⁹

The discontinuity of Jonah with respect to the rest of the Twelve is often tied to the following points. First, taking the Twelve as a literary collection, the message of Jonah is unique in bringing into the narrative past significant repentance on the part of non-Israelites.⁴⁰ This is striking because nowhere else in the collection are Assyria, Nineveh, or any other non-Israelite group singled out as repentant in the present. On the contrary, the Twelve occasionally gives implicit or explicit evidence that Nineveh/Assyria was characteristically unrepentant. Nowhere is this clearer than in the Jonah-Nahum relation (the shared use of Exod 34:6–7 also makes comparison with Joel interesting,

39 Schart, “The Jonah-Narrative,” 116.

40 This is also recognized by Schart, “The Jonah-Narrative,” 126, who draws attention to Mal 1:11.

but the contrast is not as sharp).⁴¹ Second, the non-eschatological repentance of some non-Israelites which Jonah presents as a *fait accompli* takes on added significance in light of Nahum's apparently later assertion that Assyria would be completely and irrevocably destroyed.⁴²

The Jonah-Nahum tension is not as great as some have suggested, since Nineveh's repentance is clearly of a lesser quality than that of the sailors. This understanding is at least as old as Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, which adds the following note before Nahum: "Earlier, Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath-Hepher, prophesied against this city and she turned from her sins. When she later sinned again, Nahum from Beth-Koshi prophesied against her, as is recorded in this book."⁴³ Because Nineveh's repentance did not go as far as that of the sailors, the Jonah-Nahum relationship is not difficult to understand at that point. Indeed, tensions elsewhere in the Twelve regarding the possibility of the nations' genuine repentance are more significant, especially between future scenarios in which some among the nations freely choose to worship YHWH (Mic 4:2–4; Zeph 2:11; 3:9; Zech 2:15[11]; 8:20–23; Mal 1:11, 14) and similar scenarios in which the nations appear to be doomed to destruction (e.g., Obadiah, Habakkuk).

The present study underlines the importance of addressing the question of the coherence of the Twelve by proceeding from an understanding of each book toward a perspective on the whole collection, specifically by taking account of the ways that the non-Israelite nations are characterized in each composition. Incoherence would be present, for example, if Jonah were saying that a Nineveh firmly committed to a violent, proud project of empire under the aegis of her gods will escape judgment, or if Nahum presented a genuinely repentant Nineveh as falling, despite that repentance, under the divine scourge. While patent contradiction may not characterize Jonah's relation to the rest of the Twelve, it is perhaps only slight overstatement to say with Schart

41 See on the Jonah-Nahum relationship R. Scoralick, *Gottes Güte und Gottes Zorn: die Gottesprädikationen in Exodus 34,6f und ihre intertextuellen Beziehungen zum Zwölfprophetenbuch* (HBS 33; Freiburg: Herder, 2002), 193, and note P. House's brief argument for the dynamism of Israel/Judah and the nations as 'characters' in the 'plot' of the Twelve, *The Unity of the Twelve* (JSOTSup 97; Bible and Literature 27; Sheffield: Almond, 1990), 212–17. See, on the contrast between Jonah and Joel, Schart, "The Jonah-Narrative," and J.R. Kelly, "Joel, Jonah, and the YHWH Creed: Determining the Trajectory of the Literary Influence," *JBL* 132 (2013): 805–26.

42 'Apparently' because regardless of the date at which the book seems to have been written, it is possible, if not likely, that its original readers would have seen it as referring to Nineveh in the eighth century.

43 Noted by H.-J. Fabry, *Nahum* (HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2006), 118 (my translation).

that “the narrative of Jonah changed the message of the Twelve as a whole significantly in several respects.”⁴⁴ The book sets itself apart by bringing the nations’ repentance into the narrative past, something that everywhere else in the Twelve is limited to the eschatological future. The exercise of divine mercy toward the nations on the basis of YHWH’s character as described in Exodus 34 is consistent with the general gist of the nations being accepted by YHWH in the future, but is also wholly unprecedented not only in the Twelve but in the HB/OT altogether.⁴⁵ A third contribution of the Jonah narrative to the Twelve’s treatment of the nations is its exploration of the different types of positive responses that non-Israelites might offer to new knowledge of Israel’s God. Some turn to him wholeheartedly, while others seem to do so in a less thoroughgoing way. The question posed by Jeremias, cited at the beginning of this chapter, should therefore be answered in the affirmative: in Jonah there *are* differences within the nations of such magnitude that some may repent and enter a relationship with YHWH comparable to Israel’s, while others remain (or, in the case of Nineveh, eventually revert to being) essentially unchanged in their rejection of YHWH’s supremacy.

44 Schart, “The Jonah-Narrative,” 127.

45 Schart’s critique of J. Wöhrle’s grace-redaction hypothesis is convincing (“The Jonah-Narrative,” 118–23; the argument appears in more detail in Wöhrle, “A Prophetic Reflection on Divine Forgiveness: The Integration of the Book of Jonah into the Book of the Twelve,” *JHS* 9 [2009]: article 7). Equally strong is K. Spronk’s careful argument against Wöhrle’s proposed redaction history that sees incohesion and incoherence at many points in Jonah; “Jonah, Nahum, and the Book of the Twelve: A Response to Jakob Wöhrle,” *JHS* 9 (2009): article 8.

The Nations in Micah

Despite their prominence in the book of Micah, surprisingly little has been written on the role of non-Israelite nations in it.¹ Within the last few decades, only Zapff, Roth, and a few others have touched upon the subject in a concentrated way, and their studies suggest that a robust understanding of that theme in Micah requires further research.² Zapff's careful analysis of Micah's perspective on the nations reflects well where current research on the question stands.

Because of the sins of Israel the nations march against Zion, which is devastated and humiliated (cf. Mic 1–3; 4:10–11, 14; also Mic 6:1–16; 7:1–7, especially 4b). But with the punishment of Zion, Yahweh rises at the same time against the nations and destroys them (Mic 4:11–13; cf. Mic 7:10). The destruction has the consequence of the return home of the dispersed persons of Israel (Mic 4:6f.; Mic 7:11), which entails the pilgrimage of the nations to Mount Zion (Mic 4:1–3; cf. Mic 7:12.16f.). This brings about an acknowledgement of Yahweh by (some of) the nations. The nations, however, who still show themselves hostile to Yahweh will be destroyed ultimately (Mic 5:7–14; cf. Mic 7:13).³

Zapff's identification of the nations' various roles and fates draws attention to the difficulty of interrelating them (rather than simply juxtaposing them) in the book of Micah.⁴ While semantic differences allow us to identify diversity

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- 1 E. Ben Zvi, "Micah 1.2–16: Observations and Possible Implications," *JOT* 77 (1998): 103–20, contends that an interest in the nations is integral to the book of Micah (120).
 - 2 E. Runions, *Changing subjects: gender, nation and future in Micah* (Playing the Texts 7; London and New York: Sheffield Academic, 2001); B.M. Zapff, "The Perspective on the Nations in the Book of Micah as a 'Systematization' of the Nations' Role in Joel, Jonah and Nahum: Reflections on a Context-Oriented Exegesis," in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve* (ed. P.L. Redditt and A. Scharf; BZAW 325; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 292–312.
 - 3 Zapff, "Perspective," 303. See also the summary given by R. Kessler, "Das Buch Micha als Mitte des Zwölfprophetenbuchs: Einzelheit, redaktionelle Intention und kontextuelle Lektüre," in *Wort Jhwhs, das geschah . . .* (*Hos 1,1*): *Studien zum Zwölfprophetenbuch* (ed. E. Zenger; HBS 35; Freiburg: Herder, 2002), 139–48.
 - 4 While it is related to the theme of the nations, I will not address the identity and role of Judah/Israel in Micah in equal detail; see esp. M.E. Biddle, "'Israel' and 'Jacob' in the Book of

in Micah's theology of the nations, the question of how we should analyze those differences is controverted. Zapff's interrelation of Israel/Judah and the nations is based on a diachronic reconstruction of the book's formation in which an older Deuteronomic core which did not contain chapters 4, 5, and 7 was modified to produce a two-sided message on the fates of Israel/Judah and the nations. On his view, the cycle in 1:2–5:14 puts judgment and salvation forward in relatively simple ways, while that in 6:1–7:20 wrestles with the attendant question of how distressed Zion can be forgiven and delivered.⁵ But if both cycles contain material deriving from different periods, the basis for understanding them as internally heterogeneous 'cycles' rather than incoherent pastiches of older and newer material disappears.⁶

To broach a related issue, it is often suggested that Micah 1–3 focuses on history while Micah 4–5 turns to contemplate the eschatological future.⁷ The reality is more complex, as Micah's careful use of adverbs and other temporal modifiers shows. In 3:9–5:15, for example, the author alternates between the present and the future, with a future perspective already apparent in 3:12.⁸ This need not indicate two (or more) periods of creation for this material, however.⁹ These issues and others like them require us to consider synchronic/holistic and diachronic/compositional issues as they relate to the theme of the nations in Micah. This chapter will explore the possibility of thematic coherence in Micah's treatment of the nations in concert with its significant dynamism and diversity.

Micah: Micah in the Context of the Twelve," in *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve* (ed. J.D. Nogalski and M.A. Sweeney; SBL Symposium Series, 15; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2000), 146–65.

5 Zapff, "Perspective," 302–303.

6 Zapff goes on to argue that the diversity of Micah's perspective is a "systematization" of the views in Joel, Jonah, and Nahum, most evidently in addressing the apparently divergent views of Jonah and Nahum on Nineveh/Assyria, and that it may also be related to Zechariah 14.

7 E.g., Biddle, "'Israel' and 'Jacob,'" 154.

8 This is helpfully schematized in Biddle, "'Israel' and 'Jacob,'" 155.

9 The post-exilic period (which some favor to the point of excluding other periods) was no more appropriate a milieu for the creation of the 'Then Sayings' than was the monarchic period. Cf. B.D. Sommer, "Dating Pentateuchal Texts and the Perils of Pseudo-Historicism," in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research* (ed. T.B. Dozeman, K. Schmid, and B.W. Schwartz; FAT 78; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 85–108.

7.1 Terminology

Micah's vocabulary for the nations, like that of the book generally, is rich and textured.

7.1.1 גוי-Language, עם-Language, and Related Terms

The usual terms populating the semantic field of 'nation, people group' are quite frequent in Micah, and they appear in various forms (singular, plural, suffixed) which can be correlated with various referents. To begin with the term that appears first in the book, עם appears in both singular and plural forms. The singular form with the suffix refers most often to the collective population of Judah (1:9; 2:8; 3:9 [excluding false prophets]; 6:2, 3, 5, 16; 7:14).¹⁰ It can also identify most Judahites over against the Judahite elite who oppress them (2:9; 3:3). On occasion it also refers to a (probably Judahite) speaker's people (2:4), or to Judah as a group that rejects prophetic reproof (2:11). There is no clear example of עם (sg.) referring to non-Israelite groups in Micah.

The plural עמים is one of the book's preferred ways to refer to non-Israelite groups. It can be used, first, universally to refer to an indistinct group of nations, possibly including Judah and Israel (1:2). Much more frequently, it refers to non-Israelite groups as distinct from Israel/Judah. In 4:1, 'peoples' (anarthrous עמים, in parallel with גוים רבים in 4:2) will stream to YHWH's eschatological temple; in 4:3 YHWH will adjudicate between 'many peoples' (in parallel with 'powerful nations,' עוצמים גוים). The phrase כל-העמים in 4:5 refers to all except those who follow YHWH as being each associated with his own deity, although interestingly this follows the submission of 'peoples' and 'many nations' to YHWH in 4:1–4. In 4:13 the restored Daughter Zion is told to thresh עמים רבים and to consecrate their unjust gain to YHWH, much as in 5:7[8] the remnant of Jacob will be like a rampaging lion 'among many peoples' and 'among the nations,' apparently bringing about their complete destruction. A contrasting image is presented in 5:6[7], where Jacob's remnant will be 'among many peoples' like restorative dew.

Forms of גוי appear somewhat less frequently in Micah, and only from chapter 4 onward. As is typical in the Twelve, גוי-language is used for Israel/Judah very rarely: only in 4:7 does the singular form refer to restored Israel/Judah (in parallel with שארית). Of the eight uses of גוי that refer to non-Israelite groups, all but two are plural. These plural forms are sometimes qualified adjectively:

10 There are a variety of characterizations among these lexically identical uses which can be passed over here but which are significant in other contexts: YHWH's people can be guilty, oppressed by other Judahites, restored, and so on.

‘many’ (4:2, 11), ‘mighty and distant’ (4:3). Several other uses are grammatically definite (5:7[8], 14[15], where the additional qualifier *לא שמעו* is added). The final plural form is grammatically indefinite and without an adjectival modifier (7:16). The two singular forms appear together in the prediction that ‘nation will no longer take up arms against nation’ (4:3). Since the statement is universal, and especially since international aggression against Israel/Judah figures largely in Micah, this use of *גוי* could surely include Israel/Judah as well as other groups.¹¹ The plural *גוים* thus covers, in its various uses, the same referents as *עמים* in Micah.

7.1.2 *Proper Nouns*

Micah also refers explicitly to a number of particular groups:

- Babylon (4:10), as the place of Zion’s coming exile.
- Assyria (5:4[5], 5[6] twice), as Judah’s invader and then Judah’s victim; later (in both literary and schematic terms), as the point of departure for one who will come to rebuilt Zion (7:12).
- Nimrod (5:5[6]), as a reference to Assyria¹² or, more probably, Babylon.¹³
- Egypt (6:4; 7:15 [מצרים]), as the place of Israel’s ancient enslavement; as the point of departure (specifically, its cities) for one who will come to rebuilt Zion (7:12 [מצור]).¹⁴
- (The) river. Although not grammatically a proper noun, in Biblical Hebrew *נהר* often refers to the Euphrates, and that seems beyond doubt in Mic 7:12 given the term’s appearance in parallel with Assyria and the consequent probability of a chiasmic description of restored Zion’s northern and southern boundaries.¹⁵

Finally, several non-Israelite kings from Israel’s past are mentioned and refer metonymically to their polities (Balak king of Moab and Balaam son of Beor, both in 6:5), but these references merely furnish historical proof of YHWH’s fidelity and goodness to Israel in the past.

11 As Andersen and Freedman note, it is unlikely that ‘nations’ and ‘people’ have technical senses in most of the passages we consider here and elsewhere in the Twelve. *Micah: A New Translation and Commentary* (AB 24E; New York: Doubleday, 2000), 403.

12 So H.W. Wolff, *Micah: A Commentary* (trans. G. Stansell; CC; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 147.

13 So B. Renaud, *Michée, Sophonie, Nahum* (Sources Bibliques; Paris: Gabalda, 1987), 106.

14 On *מצור*, cf. Isa 37:25 // 2 Kgs 19:24; Isa 19:6; Wolff, *Micah*, 224.

15 So, with a hint of reservation, Andersen and Freedman, *Micah*, 586.

7.1.3 *Generic Terms*

Micah also attests several generic terms which refer to non-Israelite groups.

- Conqueror (הִירֵשׁ, 1:15, participle with the definite article), an entity that YHWH will use to punish the sins of Judah/Israel;
- Apostate/backslider (שׁוֹבֵב, 2:4), a difficult term that probably refers to a non-Israelite entity that YHWH will use to punish the sins of Judah/Israel;¹⁶
- Adversary (צָר, 5:8[9] in the plural, 7:8, 10 in the singular), referring to non-Israelite groups whom the ‘remnant of Jacob’ will vanquish in the future;
- Enemy (אֹיֵב) can refer to Babylon as the one responsible for Judah’s exile (4:10, plural; 5:8[9], plural), to non-Israelite groups whom the ‘remnant of Jacob’ will vanquish in the future; or to a personified singular enemy who would rejoice over Zion’s fall (7:8) but who will later be ashamed for having claimed that YHWH had abandoned Zion (7:10).

7.2 *Roles and Characteristics of the Nations*

7.2.1 *Defendants*

While the nations do not figure prominently in Micah until chapter 4, there is at least one minor role which should be noted in the book’s opening chapter.¹⁷ In Mic 1:2, non-Israelite groups are part of a universal audience to which the book’s opening summons is addressed: אֶרֶץ וּמְלָאָה.¹⁸ At the same time, this summons is not merely a call to listen, but involves a note of accusation (יְהוָה בָּכֶם לְעַד). In cases where a person is the grammatical subject in apposition with עַד (עַד is occasionally the subject, as in Num 5:13), the marking of the object with בְּ signifies that it is the object of an accusation (Deut 19:15, 16, 18; 31:19, 26; Josh 24:22; 1 Sam 12:5; Ps 27:12; Prov 24:28; 25:18; Jer 42:5).¹⁹ The peoples of the earth are thus an audience summoned to its own trial.²⁰

16 See E. Ben Zvi, *Micah* (FOTL XXIB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 47, 55; Andersen and Freedman, *Micah*, 286–87.

17 This is noted by Ben Zvi, “Micah 1.2–16,” 109, who still carefully explores their general role there.

18 While the summons שְׁמַעוּ עַמִּים can apply to Israel/Judah (e.g., 1 Kgs 22:28), it elsewhere serves to gain the attention of non-Israelites (Ps 49:2).

19 The other lexical possibilities (e.g., לְעַד ‘forever’), cf. Ben Zvi, “Micah 1.2–16,” 105–106, are excluded by context, as he concludes (105 n. 8).

20 This is clearly rhetorical, since the book of Micah was written in Hebrew and likely never read or heard outside Judah/Yehud until centuries after its completion.

It is intriguing to consider the possibility that this indictment is against both Israel/Judah and the nations, something that the ambiguous syntax and grammar at least permit without making it certain. While the announced judgment-theophany is initially ‘for the transgression of Jacob, and for the sins of the house of Israel’ (1:5), the nations are clearly no less guilty (e.g., 4:12; 5:8–9[10–11]).²¹ The fact that apart from this reference in 1:2 the plural עַמִּים is used in Micah exclusively for non-Israelite groups makes it most likely that the parallelism of 1:2 is not synonymous, so that while non-Israelite groups are a distinct portion of the audience (עַמִּים), they are part of a single humanity when evaluated by YHWH as judge.

7.2.2 *Allies*

Passing mention is made of Achzib as a potentially non-Israelite group, allied with Israel/Judah against Assyria (1:14). Achzib, mentioned in Sennacherib’s summary of his 701 campaign, apparently agreed to oppose Assyria alongside Judah.²² The fact that Sennacherib’s inscription mentions Achzib along with “Greater Sidon, Lower Sidon, Bit-zitti, Sariptu, Mahaliba, Ushu, Akzib, Akko, walled cities. . .” but separately from the later mention of Hezekiah the Judean and “forty-six of his fortified walled cities and surrounding smaller towns, which were without number”²³ favors seeing Achzib as non-Israelite, although the material culture from the site is inconclusive.²⁴ Achzib is thus apparently a non-Israelite element aligned with Israel/Judah against Assyria, but the paucity of evidence relegates it to an unclear, minor role among those nations that oppose Judah.

7.2.3 *Integrated into or Nourished by Restored Judah*

Having dealt with a few minor aspects of the nations in Micah, we are now in a position to consider the two predominant aspects of the theme. As is often the case in Israelite prophetic literature, the nations in Micah are sometimes the object of future divine wrath and judgment (whether directly or through the instrumentality of a human agent) and sometimes the recipient

21 Contrast Ben Zvi, “Micah 1.2–16,” 105 n. 8 and 113 n. 37. The references to Samaria’s interaction with the nations in 1:7 also tie her to them in very important ways; cf. Ben Zvi, “Micah 1.2–16,” 114–15, and D. Hillers, *Micah: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Micah* (ed. P.D. Hanson with L. Fisher; Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 20–21.

22 See COS 2.119B.

23 COS 2.119B.

24 E. Stern, *Archaeology of the Bible* (2 vols.; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 2:220; Andersen and Freedman, *Micah*, 233–35.

of future divine favor and deliverance. Unlike oracles of deliverance for Israel/Judah, which frequently envision her liberation from oppressive powers, the oracles of deliverance with non-Israelite nations as their subject are focused less on what those nations are delivered from than on what they are delivered for, and they almost inevitably announce some form of service to and worship of YHWH.

These radically different fates for the nations have made many think that these two types of oracles must stem from different authors, groups, or settings. Whether expressed as the argument that Israelite prophets originally spoke only of destruction, that the most reasonable *Sitz im Leben* for oracles of salvation addressed to the nations was the Achaemenid period, or some other logic, this conclusion fragments the overall discourse of prophetic books that attest both types of oracles. Our goal is to determine to what extent the theme of the nations is coherent across the book of Micah as a literary whole, paying particular attention to juxtaposition of contrasting fates and to shifts in the identity of the nations while avoiding questionable historical judgments that presume the homogeneous, linear development of prophetic forms of speech or the possibility of tying particular literary forms to a specific historical setting apart from explicit information in the text.

In this section and the following, therefore, we will attempt to identify the reasons for which the nations are delivered or punished while at the same time determining (as far as possible) whether the same groups are in view, whether the same group can be both punished and delivered (presumably across a span of time, not simultaneously), and how well these different pieces fit together.

7.2.3.1 Transformed by YHWH and Drawn to Zion (4:1–5)

After Micah's detailed condemnation of the elites in Judah/Israel in chapters 2–3 and the announcements of judgment that culminate in the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple, the nations reappear nearly at the center of the vision of Jerusalem's restoration in 4:1–5. Unlike the nations' near-future opposition in 1:15 and (perhaps) 2:4, 4:1–5 is set “in the latter days” (4:1) and clearly presents a radically new paradigm.²⁵

25 As Allen notes, it is not the end of time but rather “an important turning point within history.” L. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 324. The eschatological setting is not dependent on the sense of **בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים** but rather on the radical shifts that characterize it with respect to other settings in the book and on the permanent, ideal nature of the new paradigm. So, rightly, R. Kessler, *Micha* (HTKAT; Friburg: Herder, 1999), 183.

After the destruction and superlative re-establishment of YHWH's temple/mountain, signifying his superiority to other gods, the nations flow to Jerusalem (4:1).²⁶ Their voyage or pilgrimage focuses on YHWH's mountain-temple as the source of instruction that will produce a distinct pattern of behavior (4:2a).²⁷ It is clear from 4:2b that these nations have come to this decision freely, after hearing the word of YHWH that somehow made its way to them from Jerusalem.²⁸

In concert with the voyage of the nations to learn from and obey Yahweh, he himself acts in their sphere.²⁹ 'Judging between' parties (with שפט; see also Ezek 34:17, 20, 22, and the parallel text in Isa 2:4) always has in view a contention, and its popularity as a role for human kings harmonizes well with the context's emphasis on the appearance of YHWH's worldwide rule in the imagery of 4:1. The parallel term 'judge/adjudicate' (Hif יכח with ל, cf. Gen 24:14, 44; Job 32:12; Prov 9:7, 8; 15:12; 19:25; Isa 2:4; 11:4) always means to correct or rebuke when used in contexts of dispute. As was the case with the word of YHWH that came from Jerusalem in 4:3, here too no explanation is offered of how this divine adjudication or establishment of justice has its effect on the nations. Be that as it may, the results are striking: these nations cease all aggression and transform their weapons into agricultural tools that will, in light of the new-found peace and prosperity in 4:3–4, surely be used frequently. The emphasis on the cessation of hostilities is noteworthy, receiving four parallel lines, two positive (the transformation of weapons into agricultural tools) and two negative (double negations of practicing and learning war). The final depiction of this transformation is presented in images of peace and prosperity that were realized under Solomon (1 Kgs 5:5[4:25]) and of the absence of fear, a sign of covenant blessing (Lev 26:6; cf. Jer 30:10; 46:27, etc.).

26 This is widely accepted on the basis of the association of gods with mountains in the HB/Ot and the ancient Near East in general; cf. Ps. 48:2–3; 68:16–17; and, for a wide range of evidence, R.J. Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (HSM 4; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972).

27 Also noted by Ben Zvi, *Micah*, 97. Kessler notes the similar expression in Ps 122:1 (*Micha*, 184).

28 Runion's reading of this as "totalizing assimilation of other nations to the rule of Yahweh" and thus as something akin to "warfare, conquest and conflict" ignores the spontaneous decision of these non-Israelites to learn of YHWH in Jerusalem; Runions, *Changing Subjects*, 19. Wolff, *Micah*, 87, may overstate his case when he urges that "A mission emanating from God's people is not even hinted at" in this passage. The text says nothing of the means by which the nations hear of YHWH, and the question must be left open.

29 The divine actions in 4:3 are probably to be understood as part of this process that transforms some of the nations rather than as a discrete stage with a precise chronological position.

It is striking that the nations would reappear so abruptly following an oracle of judgment against Judah, and that this sudden reappearance sees them with a changed attitude toward YHWH, until now affiliated only with Judah. In light of their brief characterization as those who have led Israel/Judah astray religiously (1:7) and violently attacked her (1:9, 12), this clearly presupposes the most fundamental transformation imaginable, one that entails their reconciliation with YHWH, with Judah, and with one another.

Whether 4:5 is part of this oracle or not,³⁰ the fact that it immediately follows 4:1–4, and especially the affirmation by the group that speaks in 4:5 that although every one of the ‘nations’ follows its own deity, ‘we’ will follow YHWH forever, require us to read the two sections in light of one another. While 4:5 is often understood as a Judahite affirmation of Yahwism in opposition to the worship of other gods by the nations in the historical present, the transformation of ‘many’ from among the nations into followers of YHWH in the eschatological scenario sketched in 4:1–4 should not be forgotten.³¹

There are thus at least two options for interrelating these two passages: either the ‘we’ of 4:5 includes the voice of those nations who in 4:1–4 have submitted to YHWH (i.e., a change in their characterization), or, if it does not, the reader must recognize the temporal shift from the eschatology of 4:1–4 back to the present of 4:5, in which the ‘nations’ by definition do *not* walk in the name of YHWH (cf. their opposition to Zion ‘now,’ in 4:11). In other words, the coherence of the first option depends on the dynamism of the nations themselves, and that of the second on a temporal shift from future to present. While both are possible, the continuation of the eschatological perspective in 4:6–8, the absence of any intervening group between 4:2 and 4:5, the non-Israelite 1cp antecedent in 4:3 of the ‘we’ in 4:5, and the lexical links between 4:5 and 4:1–4 (e.g., ‘walk’ in 4:2, 4:5, in relation to ‘YHWH . . . God’ both times) all favor the

30 Ben Zvi refers to it as “the response of the inclusive ‘we’” (*Micah*, 95), while Kessler argues that the statement closing the divine speech that ends 4:4 marks the end of the section, but also that the link between them is indissoluble (*Micah*, 187).

31 Pace Ben Zvi, *Micah*, 101, it is difficult to imagine that “each nation will keep its own god” while also accepting “YHWH’s rule and teachings.” YHWH’s rule is a concept that excludes other deities’ claims to the same status (compare the term ‘monarchial monotheism’). Micah, speaking in YHWH’s name (3:8), condemns Israel/Judah for worship of other gods and the related cults (1:5, 7), and the idea of any group enjoying blessings tied to the covenant with YHWH (4:4) without in some way entering that covenant is therefore unintelligible. Moreover, the book ends with the nations fearing or revering YHWH in a way that gives him unparalleled importance (7:17).

conclusion that 4:5 shares the same perspective as 4:1–4, 6–8.³² If that is indeed the case, 4:5 preserves the newly-made distinction within the larger group of the nations that reappears very clearly in the second and last passage in Micah that announces well-being for (some of) the nations, 5:6–8[7–9].

7.2.3.2. Nourished by the Remnant of Jacob (5:6[7])

The only other section in Micah in which good comes to the nations is 5:6–8[7–9].³³ There a brief affirmation that the remnant of Judah will nourish, like dew, some ‘in the midst of many peoples’ is juxtaposed with a sharply contrasting image of the remnant as a lion ‘among the nations, in the midst of many peoples’ that will completely destroy its prey. The antithetical roles of bringing life and growth as dew and causing destruction as a lion are not elaborated upon in that context, although the former likely has ties to 4:1–5 and especially 7:11–12 while the latter echoes 4:14–5:5[5:1–6].

Before we consider the nations themselves, we must briefly identify the ‘remnant of Jacob.’ The group from among the nations that submits to YHWH in 4:1–5 finds a mirror image in the ‘remnant’ in 4:6–8. In a new but apparently contemporaneous section introduced by בְּיוֹם הַהוּא, God announces in 4:6 that he will form a remnant from Israel/Judah that has come through judgment. The terms lame, outcast, and afflicted in 4:6–7a may reflect the effects of God’s judgment of Judah (3:9–12), culminating in the exile (2:12–13). Just as Yahweh’s actions in 4:1–4 affected an unspecified portion of the nations, his actions in 4:6–8 focus on some fraction of Israel/Judah and change them into a ‘remnant.’ This renewed ‘daughter Zion’ will be brought back from exile (4:6–7a), made

32 Compare the similar conclusions of M. Richelle, “Un triptyque au coeur du livre de Michée (Mi 4–5),” *VT* 62 (2012): 232–47, esp. 239, although Richelle favors a break after 4:7. M.E. Biddle, “Dominion Comes to Jerusalem: An Examination of Developments in the Kingship and Zion Traditions as Reflected in the Book of the Twelve with Particular Attention to Micah 4–5,” in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve. Methodological Foundations—Redactional Processes—Historical Insights* (ed. R. Albertz, J. Nogalski, and J. Wöhrle; BZAW 433; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 253–67, esp. 258–60, contends that “Mic 4:8 culminates the depiction of [Zion’s] glorious future as the seat of worldwide . . . authority, located atop the highest of the mountains, attracting the nations of the world to receive YHWH’s instruction and guidance” (259).

33 Here I define ‘good’ in contextual terms: cultic proximity to YHWH, security, etc., as in 4:4. While their abject submission and humiliation in 7:16–17 might be construed as positive from an Israelite perspective, that section will be treated separately since it involves no reconciliation between the nations and Israel or her deity and no clear transformation of the nations’ identity.

into a mighty 'nation,' and will enjoy, under Yahweh, the dominion whose contours Israel's earlier history had sketched (4:8).

Returning to our examination of 5:6[7], we note first that the book's second cycle (3:1–5:14[15]) frequently seems to oscillate between the present and the future. The setting of 5:6[7] is thus quite difficult to determine, and is probably better described than defined. It is a time after the formation of the remnant (which exists already) and after Assyria has initiated hostilities, but before Zion's eschatological shepherd (5:3[4]) repulses an attack within her territory. From this Zion/Judah-centered perspective the text moves to a global horizon that sees the remnant active outside its historic territory, 'in the midst of many peoples.'

It is in this international setting that Judah's remnant, liberated, empowered, and defended by YHWH, will be 'like dew from YHWH, like showers on the grass, which delay for no one, nor wait for any human being' (5:6[7]). The context makes this first aspect of the remnant's interaction with the nations unexpected, to say the least. The text moves from the repulsion of Judah's enemies in a Palestinian context to the hydrating effect of the remnant beyond its borders. In order for these sections to be coherent when taken together, therefore, it seems necessary to posit that the 'nations' refers to a bipartite group (as in 4:1–4), some of whom willingly submit to YHWH and benefit from his cult, Torah, and care, and some of whom continue their aggression against him and his people. Not only does this distinction appear elsewhere in Micah, but it seems required by the text itself, which would suffer from the most blatant and confusing contradiction if the remnant's diametrically opposed roles had the same group as their object. As it stands, the text says nothing of the identities of those benefited or harmed by the remnant, and simply locates the two groups 'in the midst of many peoples.'

The various aspects of parallelism³⁴ between 5:6[7] and 5:7[8] make it difficult to affirm that the imagery of dew involves *only* the chronological aspect (although it is certainly present, as the verbs קוה and יחל make clear).³⁵ As Allen notes, the symmetry between the two verses involves the effect of the dew on the one hand, and of the lion on the other.³⁶ The effect of טל in the HB is always desirable (Gen 27:28, 39; Deut 33:13–14, 28; 2 Sam 1:21; Hag 1:10;

34 See, e.g., those noted in Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 352.

35 I agree with Kessler, *Micah*, 241, that the 'chronological' aspect seems to underline the divine agency in sending dew, and thus divine agency in sending the remnant among the nations. Note also Richelle's reasons for favoring the coherence of the pericope, Richelle, "Un triptyque au coeur du livre de Michée," 243.

36 Allen, *Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 352.

Zech 8:12, which link it to agricultural produce; in some passages it is a simple phenomenon without any explicit effect, Exod 16:14; Jdg 6:37–40, etc.). Only one passage focuses exclusively on the manner that dew falls, covering everything, to describe a successful military assault (2 Sam 17:12).

While a variety of factors favor retaining the beneficial connotation of dew's effect here, especially its use in metaphors for mediated divine teaching (Deut 32:2, cf. Mic 4:1–4), blessing on reunited Israel (Ps 133:3), and divine presence or blessing for Israel (Hos 14:5), another reason for doing so is the presence of a nearly identical contrast in Prov 19:12: "like the roar of a lion is the king's wrath, but like dew on the grass is his favor." Not only are the same two subjects present in the proverb, but the proverbial nature of the saying presupposes that a widespread understanding of dew as favorable existed in ancient Israel.³⁷

The antithetical parallelism in 5:6–7[8–9] reinforces the implicit life-giving aspect of dew in a Levantine climate. According to this half of the diptych on the remnant, the remnant of Jacob will bring life, fecundity, and health to some 'in the midst of the peoples.' No explanation is given of how the remnant might interact with these presumably distant groups, nor are any details given as to whether this beneficent action is accomplished directly or through some instrument or means. The parallelism with 5:7[8] may favor a direct action-effect relationship, but even in such a case the unparalleled importance of the roles of the eschatological shepherd and of YHWH himself (note the first-person singular in 5:14[15]) makes precision impossible.

7.2.4 *Defeated or Destroyed at the Hands of Judah, the Remnant, or YHWH*

We now turn to the other group of passages dealing with the nations in Micah, and to do so we must return to the first half of the book's second section. From that point we will follow the literary order of the book forward until the last relevant section, 7:16–17.

7.2.4.1 Threshed by Daughter Zion (4:9–13)

The first section in which the nations appear as the opponent of Israel/Judah establishes a timeframe very close to the present by means of עתה (4:9, 10) and the prospective reference to exile.³⁸ (This role was hinted at several times in the opening chapters [1:9, 12], and mentioned in 1:15 and perhaps 2:4, but these references are too concise to be explored on their own, and essentially

37 J.L. Crenshaw, *Old Testament Wisdom: An Introduction* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 56.

38 Andersen and Freedman, *Micah*, 442; Ben Zvi, *Micah*, 113–14.

adumbrate the later appearance of the theme.) In chapter 4, Babylon is the destination to which the ‘daughter of Zion’ will go as part of divine judgment, but it is there that she will subsequently experience deliverance (4:10).³⁹ In a pre-exilic context ‘many nations’ are said to be Zion’s adversaries (4:11), and they show their hatred for her by their expressed desire to witness her desecration and defilement.⁴⁰ Despite their expectation of victory, however, these nations are ignorant of Yahweh’s plans (4:12) and will be harvested like grain by daughter Zion for Yahweh’s benefit (4:13). The language echoes passages that describe the conquest of Canaan by Israel (Hifil חָרַם with לִיהוָה, cf. Josh 6:17 and similar passages), and the successful outcome of this campaign against the nations is their being despoiled (cf. Hag 2:7–8; Joel 4:5–7[3:5–7]; Zech 14:1). The close interrelationship of Israel/Judah to the nations is evident here, as 4:13 reverses Zion’s fate as described in 4:10 by radically changing the status of the nations that hate Zion from potentially victorious foes to trampled victims.⁴¹

7.2.4.2 Assyria Defeated by the Eschatological Ruler of Daughter Zion (5:4–5[5–6])

As noted above, the setting of the Assyria section is quite vague, following the rise of Judah’s shepherd-king but not clearly situated chronologically.⁴² Even if the origins of the section date to Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem or to a related event, our interest is in Assyria as presented by the book of Micah, where she is part of a larger group that shares a common fate.⁴³

The siege announced in 4:14[5:1] introduces a crisis that endures until Israel’s eschatological ruler appears on the scene (עַד עֵת, 5:2[3]). The following context explores the effects of his ‘arising and shepherding’ his flock (5:4[5]) in units introduced by the future temporal indicator וְהָיָה (5:6, 7[7, 8]). Since this individual’s greatness will extend over the globe (5:4), the nations are (implicitly) subordinate to him, but that general picture does not allow us to determine

39 See on this reference M. Boda, “Babylon in the Book of the Twelve,” *HBAI* 3 (2014): 225–48.

40 Ben Zvi underlines the efficiency of direct discourse as a means of characterization, *Micah*, 117. While there are a number of interesting points of contact between the history of Judah and this text (Obadiah 11–14, as noted by Kessler, *Micah*, 211; Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem), our goal here is not so much to determine historical reference as to clarify the characterization of the nations in a variety of scenarios.

41 Andersen and Freedman, *Micah*, 455.

42 Kessler’s argument that the ‘we’-statements in Micah date to the Persian period seems to follow that dating *a priori* rather than to arrive at it by argumentation (*Micah*, 234). A precise chronological setting for the nations-material here remains elusive.

43 Wolff, *Micah*, 147, notes the use of ‘Assyria’ in post-exilic literature to refer to non-Assyrian entities.

whether this means that bellicose nations are destroyed or subjugated, or that nations of a different sort willingly submit to Israel's God.⁴⁴

The picture is noticeably clearer in 5:4[5], when Assyria invades Judah. The invasion soon becomes a rout, and Judah's sword drives the Assyrian from her land. But this concise description still leaves the reader with an incomplete picture. Has Assyria been destroyed or simply repulsed? Is Babylon permanently off the scene? The preceding passages attribute to Judah's eschatological ruler a world-wide rule (5:3[4]), but the conflict with Assyria cautions against any reading of the text that presumes the chronological sequence of the events it envisages. This lack of clarity can only be redressed by continuing our investigation of the remaining nations-pericopes.

7.2.4.3 Destroyed by the Remnant of Judah (5:7–8[8–9])

Assyria's fate, only indistinctly sketched in 5:4–5, is shown in the following verses to be part of, or the prelude to, a more definitive outcome for all those nations that oppose YHWH and Judah. This final outcome is presented twice, first with the remnant as the agent (5:7–8[8–9]), then with YHWH as the agent in the closing lines of the book's second section.

We recall, first, the creation of the remnant of Jacob, probably in view in 4:6–8. The remnant is hardly born into a trouble-free life: while its ultimate destiny is peaceful participation in YHWH's kingdom (4:8), on the historical plane it must prepare for a painful exile as the prelude to its victory and deliverance.

Having already considered the Judah-centered rebuffing of Assyrian aggression in 5:4–5[5–6], we encounter in 5:6–8[7–9] more complex dynamics on the international scene. We have already studied the first half of this diptych, in which Judah's remnant will be 'like dew from YHWH, like showers on the grass, which delay for no one, nor wait for any human being' (5:6[7]). As unexpected as that portrait is (but cf. 4:1–4), it is inseparably connected both by lexical and grammatical similarities and by semantic contrast to the following portrait that we will now consider, that of Judah's lion-like destruction of some 'among the nations, in the midst of many peoples.' These complementary sections together present the 'nations' as a bipartite group, with some benefitting from the remnant and others falling prey to it. Interestingly, the lion metaphor removes the possibility of reconciliation between the remnant and the nations

44 Here I loosely follow the taxonomy for the nations proposed by J. Kessler, *The Book of Haggai: Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud* (VTSup 91; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 188.

in view in the second half of the diptych.⁴⁵ This juxtaposition of contrasting fates and identical settings, along with the absence of any characterization, make this passage one of the more potentially incoherent in Micah.

‘A lion among the beasts of the forests’ is both the most majestic and the most dangerous of beasts. The mortal danger it poses to all other animals is surely in view here, and that danger is amplified by conceiving of a lion among sheep. Without defensive or evasive capacities, the sheep will inevitably fall prey to the king of beasts (5:7[8]). Similarly, the remnant will be victorious over her enemies (cf. the similar idiom in Deut 32:40), who will be ‘cut off.’⁴⁶ While it is possible that 5:8[9] is a prayer rather than an affirmation regarding the remnant, its active role in 5:7[8] makes it unlikely that the remnant’s involvement would completely disappear.⁴⁷

This section thus presents some of the nations with almost no characterization at all, yet denies to them the possibility of reconciliation since that concept is incompatible with the lion-lamb relationship as presented here. Despite the lack of any clear characterization, the fate of those nations who are not benefitted by the presence of the remnant is clear and absolute: they will be completely destroyed. The lack of characterization can probably be attributed to the fact that this passage is part of a longer section that deals frequently with the nations, and which thus supplies sufficient detail elsewhere in the context (e.g., 5:14[15]) for an understanding of why some among the nations would be destroyed.

7.2.4.4 The Object of Yahweh’s Vengeance (5:14[15])

After YHWH’s promise in 5:9–13[10–14] to destroy Judah’s military and (illicit) cult infrastructure interrupts the generally positive tone with regards to Judah in chapters 3–5, that positive tone returns in a promise that he will execute vengeance on ‘the nations that have not heard’ (5:14[15]).⁴⁸ This statement

45 For our purposes it is immaterial whether the remnant or a ruler is in view. Andersen and Freedman (*Micah*, 487) summarize some problems with the understanding that the remnant is in view in 5:6–8, but some of their suggestions (e.g., that two distinct chronological phases could be in view) undermine their conclusion that the ‘ruler’ of 4:14–5:5 is in view.

46 So B. Waltke, *A Commentary on the Book of Micah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 313, and others.

47 For arguments in favor of seeing 5:8 as a prayer to YHWH, see Kessler, *Micah*, 242–44.

48 The suggestion that this verse was originally directed against Israel/Judah and was transformed into an oracle against the nations has rightly been rejected as long ago as A. Kapelrud, “Eschatology in the Book of Micah,” *VT* 11 (1961): 392–405 (402–403). J.T. Willis, “The Authenticity and Meaning of Micah 5, 9–14,” *ZAW* 81 (1969): 353–68, surveys a variety of views on the relation of this verse to the preceding context.

is continuous with 5:7–8[8–9], and while adding no new ideas does add some details.⁴⁹

First, YHWH's actions against the nations are his 'retribution;' second, the nations so punished 'have not listened/obeyed.' The note of retribution is sharp, emphasized as it is by the adverbial phrase *בְּאֵף וּבְחִמָּה*.⁵⁰ The phrase 'execute vengeance' or 'enact retribution' has parallels in Ps 149:7; Jdg 11:36; Ezek 25:17,⁵¹ and similar expressions (especially verbal forms of *נָקַם*) highlight divine retribution because of sins of non-Israelite entities (human revenge, scorn, hatred in Ezek 25:15; those who oppose YHWH in Nah 1:1–14, etc.).

While interpreters generally think that the expression *הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר לֹא שָׁמְעוּ* in 5:14[15] has in view 1:2 (*שָׁמְעוּ עִמָּיִם*), it is not clear what the nations are presumed to have heard. Several considerations suggest that they are not presumed in 5:14 to have heard one or more parts of what later became the book of Micah (including the material following the summons in 1:2). First, because the book of Micah was written in Hebrew for a Hebrew readership, it is difficult to understand how YHWH would hold an allophone audience responsible for reading and heeding it. Second, Israel was ideally to communicate something of her God to the nations in the present primarily by her conduct (Deut 4:5–6), and almost never by more direct, verbal means.⁵² Third, apart from a few murky exceptions, it is only in eschatological texts that the nations

49 While some take absence of information as evidence of redaction, this reasoning must be applied carefully for at least two reasons. First, the author always has the right to withhold information as long as it does not render the communication unintelligible. Second, the distinction between lacking *necessary* information and lacking *complete* information should be kept in mind.

50 Wolff, *Micah*, 160, interprets the fact that this phrase occurs several times in Deuteronomy as evidence for this verse's perspective on the nations being Deuteronomistic. But this surely claims too much: as Barr reminds us, meaningful communication takes place via statements, not isolated lexemes, and one can hardly restrict to the Deuteronomist, his school, or those like him a perspective that held the nations accountable to YHWH in some way or other. See Ben Zvi, *Micah*, 136–39, for other arguments in favor of the passage's literary unity.

51 Noted by J. Wagenaar, *Judgement & Salvation: The Composition & Redaction of Micah 2–5* (VTSup 85; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 200.

52 Note especially Jer 18:7–8; 27:1–11; cf. Jeremiah 39; 40. The data is briefly surveyed in D. Timmer, *A Gracious and Compassionate God: Mission, salvation and spirituality in the book of Jonah* (NSBT; Leicester: Apollos, 2011), 30–37. F. Andersen and D. Freedman, *Amos: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 24A; New York: Doubleday, 1989), 232, claim too much when they assert that "the prophets, from Elisha (2 Kgs 9) to Jeremiah (27:3—which lists four of the six nations charged by Amos) delivered oracles to, not just about, other nations."

have heard something of YHWH (most relevant is Micah 4:1–4; note also the many passages in the Psalter).⁵³ Finally, the summons of 1:2 seems purely rhetorical, much as is the summons to the mountains in 6:2, and does not require the presence or attention of the party mentioned in order to have the intended effect.⁵⁴

These considerations make it likely that the ‘hearing’ of 5:14 is focused not on this or that part of the developing book of Micah, but rather on the only basis that the book itself offers for asserting that the nations did in fact hear something: the assertion that in the distant future ‘the Torah will go forth from Zion, and YHWH’s word from Jerusalem’ (4:2b).⁵⁵ Not only does this accord well with the present/eschatological distinction that is present elsewhere in the HB/OT, it avoids the problematic connection of the oracle against the nations in 5:14 to the summons in 1:2. The heedless nations here are thus the counterpart to those in 4:1–4, and their fates contrast sharply as a result.

7.2.4.5 Destroyed or Subdued by YHWH (7:7–17)

The final unit of Micah consists of several smaller sections, typically identified as 7:7–10, 11–17, 18–20.⁵⁶ We will treat the first two sections, but leave aside the third since it does not include the nations. In 7:7–10, although the ‘enemy’ is not explicitly identified as the ‘nations,’ its description in relational and theological terms as the one who rejoices over Israel’s punishment and says to her ‘Where is Yahweh your God?’ (7:10) establishes a close relationship between

53 See further M. Boda, “‘Declare His Glory among the Nations’: The Psalter as Missional Collection,” in *Christian Mission: Old Testament Foundations and New Testament Developments* (ed. S.E. Porter and C.L. Westfall; Eugene: Pickwick, 2010), 13–41; P. Raabe, “Why Prophetic Oracles against the Nations?,” in *Fortunate the Eyes That See* (ed. A. Beck et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 236–57; and V. Haarmann, *JHWH-Verehrer der Völker: Die Hinwendung von Nichtisraeliten zum Gott Israels in alttestamentlichen Überlieferungen* (AThANT 91; Zurich: TVZ, 2008).

54 This point is clarified by Ben Zvi, *Micah*, 28.

55 Ben Zvi refers to this as “the future created by the speaker within the world of the text,” *Micah*, 138. Kessler, *Micha*, 253–54, moves in this direction when he suggests that the judgments against Judah in Micah 1–3; 5:9–13 are in view, but the most likely object of the verb of hearing in the context of Micah 4–5 remains the Torah. Wolff, *Micah*, 161, appears to reach the same conclusion when he states that 5:14 refers not only to Micah 1–3, but also to “the sayings . . . in chaps. 4 and 5 which apply directly to the nations.”

56 For a different interpretation of the passage, see J. Nogalski, “Micah 7:8–20: Re-evaluating the Identity of the Enemy,” in *The Bible as Human Witness to Divine Revelation: Hearing the Word of God Through Historically Dissimilar Traditions* (ed. R. Heskett and B.P. Irwin; LHBOTS 469; New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 125–42.

it and the nations who did not understand Yahweh's ways with his people in 4:12.⁵⁷ The explicit characterization of the 'enemy' (cf. the characterization of the 'nations' by means of direct speech in 4:11) presents it as opposed to God and to the people whom he ultimately delivers, the 'remnant' after its purification and deliverance (7:7–9a). The characterization of the enemy thus overlaps nearly completely with that of the nations who did not understand YHWH's plans (4:12). The fate of this enemy is likewise identical to that of those nations: the enemy will be trampled down (7:10b; cf. the identical phrase in Isa 10:6).⁵⁸ The key shift in the enemy's fate (its characterization is static) is tied to the shift in chronological perspective (עַד in 7:9) from the present in which Zion under discipline is humiliated before her victorious enemy to the future in which the aggressive enemy suffers both shame and destruction.⁵⁹

The presentation of the nations in 7:11–17 further develops the negative treatment of the theme in 7:8–10.⁶⁰ This pericope, while implicitly allowing the binary characterization and fate of the nations seen in chapter 5 (i.e., as either submissive and benefited or rebellious and punished), should probably be seen instead as leaving aside (for reasons we will explore below) the link between the restoration of Zion and good for the nations in favor of the link between the restoration of Zion and the shame and destruction of her enemies, already introduced in 7:7–10.

We begin with the question whether non-Israelite nations or Israelite exiles are on their way to Zion in 7:12, where the verbal subject is 3ms and no clear antecedent can be identified (יִזְרָאֵל וְעַדִּיךָ יְבוּא). Waltke thinks that "the only sensible" verbal subject for יְבוּא is 'your people' in 7:14,⁶¹ Ben Zvi sees "a lasting ambiguity" that does not allow for a choice of one over the other,⁶² and

57 The identity of the speaker is hard to ascertain in 7:1–10, but it seems to be the remnant in the midst of her purification from sin (she speaks of her punishment as ongoing). If it were Israel/Judah as a whole, the remnant concept would collapse.

58 M. Roth, *Israel und die Völker im Zwölfprophetenbuch: Eine Untersuchung zu den Büchern Joel, Jona, Micha und Nahum* (FRLANT 210; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005), 186, concludes that the identity cannot be ascertained, but strict identity (i.e., coreferentiality) between the rebellious nations and the 'enemy' is not necessary for the nations theme to be traced here as well. Kessler, *Micha*, 298–99, notes the close similarity of 'Assyria' and 'enemy' language in Micah, which favors a more precise definition than Roth allows.

59 Ben Zvi, *Micah*, 174.

60 Wolff, *Micah*, 223, calls this section a "supplementary commentary" on 7:8–10.

61 Waltke, *A Commentary on Micah*, 438–39.

62 Ben Zvi, *Micah*, 177.

Andersen and Freedman seem to favor seeing the messianic hero or YHWH as the one who will come to 'you.'⁶³

The immediate context of 7:12 is centered on the rebuilding of Zion's walls and the extension of her boundaries (7:11).⁶⁴ Such a scenario has much in common with aspects of the restoration of Judah/Zion elsewhere in Micah, especially the rebuilding of the temple in 4:1–4 after its destruction in 3:12 and the expansion of the shepherd-king's rule across the earth in 5:3[4]. However, those two passages present very different responses on the part of the nations to Zion's rebuilding, and so cannot elucidate the dynamics here.

While both Judean exiles and non-Israelites are said to come to Zion earlier in Micah (for the remnant, 2:12–13; for the nations, 4:1–4), and while the superlative description of these travelers' origins (7:12) could conceivably indicate more places than were home to Israelite exiles (but cf. Isa 11:11–16; Deut 30:4), other factors make a focus on returning Judean exiles more likely. First, Judah's exile is in view in 7:7–10, and rebuilt Zion is contrasted with the 'earth' in 7:13, so a reference to the nations entering Zion in 7:12 would disturb an otherwise consistent separation of Zion and its inhabitants from the rest of the world and those outside Zion. Second, the only clear reference to the nations in 7:14–17 sees them disgraced and vanquished. Third, the image of an enclosed and expanded land better suits its role as the ideal, permanent home for a returned people than for worshipping pilgrims who would only visit.⁶⁵

This focus on Zion is reinforced in 7:13. Apart from 7:2, where the land is qualified as normally possessing 'faithful' persons, Micah always uses ארץ (without suffixes or modifiers in construct) for the entire world (1:2, 3; 4:13; 5:3[4]; 6:2; 7:17). This pattern strongly favors seeing Jerusalem here as the only refuge from a global judgment that will come upon those whose deeds are evil (cf. 3:4; 5:14[15]).

The final discussion of the nations in Micah follows the prayer in 7:14 that YHWH would shepherd his people. The divine response is that YHWH's protection and care for his people will rival the superlative events (נפלאות) that accompanied the exodus from Egypt (7:15). Per the introductory phrase, these future divine actions will focus on an ambiguous 3ms object (אֲרָאֲנוּ, 7:15). Since 7:15 begins a divine response to a prayer for 'your people,' it is likely that YHWH's עַם is the antecedent. But while the flow of thought in the passage and

63 Andersen and Freedman, *Micah*, 585, 587.

64 LXX has "a day of making brick; that day shall be the day of your destruction and your statutes will be abolished." The focus on walls in 7:11a suggests that חֵק in 7:10b should be translated as 'boundary' or 'frontier.'

65 This last point is made by Kessler, *Micha*, 304.

the grammar alike favor seeing restored Judah as the witness of YHWH's saving work, נפלאות can have a dual audience, simultaneously demonstrating his saving favor to his people and his displeasure to his enemies. Not only is the presence of such a dual audience literarily assembled around these wonders (restored Judah in 7:14, the nations in 7:16–17), but the explicit analogue of the exodus sees YHWH show his power to the Pharaoh (Exod 9:16; 10:6) and to Israel (14:13, 30) simultaneously. It is thus possible that the nations are part of the global audience that witnesses YHWH's great acts of deliverance on behalf of his people.

This seems all the more likely since the following verses present the response of the nations to YHWH's deliverance of his people, using seven verbs (an eighth is elided in the second strophe of Mic 7:17, and perhaps a ninth after the next verb in the same verse). They “become ashamed of all their might, they put their hand on their mouth, their ears become deaf, they lick the dust like a serpent, [lick] like a reptile of the earth, they tremble [and come] from their fortresses to YHWH our God, they are in dread and fear before you.” It is not necessary to examine in detail each of these elements, most of which are well-known expressions of shame and disgrace. The only ambiguous element is the last one: ‘they will fear before you [YHWH].’

Ben Zvi notes this as the sole difference between the descriptions of the nations in 7:11–17 and 7:7–10, but does not explain what ‘fearing YHWH’ means.⁶⁶ Andersen and Freedman conclude that “the nations will fear Yahweh on account of Israel, because of the wonders Yahweh did on Israel’s behalf,” but they too fail to specify what kind of fear this is.⁶⁷ While the verb-direct object pair מִן + divine name differs syntactically from the expression here (מִן + יְרָא + divine name),⁶⁸ there is no clear difference between them, and both can refer to simple fear, reverence, or a combination of the two.⁶⁹ While Waltke argues that the ‘fear’ the nations show (פֶּחַד) in the preceding clause is the opposite of trust in Yahweh, the use of the same term to describe authentic repentance on the part of Israel’s remnant in Hos 3:5 undermines his argument.⁷⁰

66 Ben Zvi, *Micah*, 179.

67 Andersen and Freedman, *Micah*, 594.

68 Among the eighty or so occurrences, note Exod 9:30; Lev 19:14, 32; 25:17, 36, 43; Ps 33:8; cf. also Eccl 3:14; 8:12; Hag 1:12.

69 As the attested uses show, Kessler’s distinction (*Micha*, 309) between transitive uses (with אֵל, denoting reverence) and reflexive uses (with מִן, denoting fear) cannot be sustained.

70 Waltke, *Micah*, 461, with reference to L. Derousseaux, *La Crainte de Dieu dans l’Ancien Testament* (Paris: Cerf, 1970), 74.

All this leaves us with a rather ambiguous response to YHWH on the part of the nations in Micah 7. The overall emphasis on the rebellious nations' shame and silence (rather than an overt commitment to YHWH as in 4:2) suggests that these nations remain separate from Zion in the future envisioned here,⁷¹ while the possibility of their future submission to YHWH is not denied.⁷²

7.3 Analysis

7.3.1 *Lexical Overlap and Distinction between Israel/Judah and the Nations*

Because distinction is far more prominent than overlap in the terminology used for Israelite and non-Israelite entities in Micah, it is possible to treat the two aspects together. As noted above, the only cases in which גַּי and עַם terminology fully encompasses both Israelite and non-Israelite groups appear in the book's opening summons (1:2), the anticipation that once many nations come to Jerusalem to learn from YHWH, 'nation will no longer take up the sword against nation' (4:3, probably), and YHWH's promise that he will make the remnant a 'strong nation' (4:7).

The first of these passages (1:2) clearly summons all nations, including Judah and Israel, to hear YHWH's case against them, and so characterizes them as guilty, but announces no fate and specifies no clear setting. This example is notable for putting Israel/Judah and the nations on the same plane when it is a matter of their judicial standing before YHWH. The second case (4:3) likely

71 Wolff also does not choose between these two options (*Micah*, 228). Allen decides in favor of "forced homage" of the nations as "the forces of evil" (*Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah*, 400).

72 Roth, *Israel und die Völker*, 203, favors seeing the possibility of the formerly rebellious nations turning to YHWH after their humiliation in 7:16–17. I agree with A. Scharf, "The Jonah-Narrative within the Book of the Twelve," in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve. Methodological Foundations—Redactional Processes—Historical Insights* (ed. R. Albertz, J. Nogalski, and J. Wöhrle; BZAW 433; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 109–28 (124), that G. Metzner's readings of Mic 7:11b, 12b, and especially 19b as possessing positive implications for the nations are "a bit far-fetched." My views on 7:11b, 12b have been outlined above. In the case of 7:19b, the closest third-person antecedent is "the remnant of [YHWH's] possession" (7:18), and there is no semantic shift that could account for a change in referent from Israel/Judah, clearly indicated in 7:19–20 by not fewer than three first-person plural suffixes and the terms 'Jacob' and 'Abraham' (both 'our forefathers'). See G. Metzner, *Kompositionsgeschichte des Michabuches* (Europäische Hochschulschriften XXIII, 635; Frankfurt: Lang, 1988).

refers to Israel/Judah as a potential participant in conflict that will no longer take place due to the transformation of the nations from bellicose opponents to peaceable fellow-worshippers of YHWH, but the expression גוי . . . גוי itself does not undo that pericope's clear distinction of Israel/Judah from these nations. The third and final case (4:7) is of no significance here despite the terminological overlap, since the referent of the 'nation' is clearly the restored remnant, and thus hardly implies any different status than the term עַם, which Micah uses more frequently to refer to Judah/Israel.

One additional point should be noted: the fracturing of the homogenous 'nations' into two groups. Micah asserts that the nations are not, or at least will not always be, a homogenous group. The book makes this explicit in its repeated use of 'many' to separate the category of nations into two groups. Thus 'many' nations are delivered in the future (4:2), are reconciled with each other and with Yahweh (4:3), see themselves as Yahwists (4:5), and benefit from the remnant (5:6). Another group of 'many' nations opposes Zion (4:11, 13), is destroyed by the remnant (5:7), and remains Yahweh's opponent to the end (7:16–17).⁷³

7.3.2 *Semantic Overlap and Separation of Israel/Judah and the Nations*

Because Micah foresees *both* judgment and deliverance for *both* Israel/Judah and the nations, the lenses of semantic overlap and separation (seen especially in terms of the groups' characterizations and fates) are best applied not in terms of the two groups considered separately, but in terms of the two fates that dominate their presentation. There are some among the nations who will experience the deliverance that Judah's remnant will experience, and there are others among the nations who will undergo a judgment essentially identical to that of the Judahites who persist in their abusive treatment of their fellow citizens. More pointedly, one could say that the terminological distinction between Israel/Judah and the nations in Micah is unimportant in terms of the groups' characterization, and thus unimportant in terms of their diverse fates.⁷⁴

73 Although 'nations' occurs without the modifier 'many' in 7:16–17, the plural noun there is anarthrous, so no inclusive referent is possible.

74 Andersen and Freedman (*Micah*, 413) argue that "Israel is not distinguished from the other nations in [4:2]," but this ignores both the nearly exclusive restriction of nations-language to non-Israelite entities in Micah, and the specification in the immediate context (4:1) that these people come to Zion to learn of the God of Jacob for the first time. This oversimplification produces more incoherence in the theme than is necessary by integrating Israel into the nations, a melding of categories that may be present in some degree in depictions of the exile, but is hardly intelligible in depictions of eschatological consummation.

The passage that stands out in Micah's positive treatment of the nations is surely 4:1–4. Much as the restored and returned exiles find themselves under YHWH's kingly protection and guidance (2:12–13; 4:8, 13, etc.), those from among the nations who submit themselves to YHWH and his Torah and participate in worship of him experience the well-being that Israel knew at the height of its prosperity as a united kingdom (4:4). This characterization of the nations finds various parallels with that of the repentant remnant in Micah, as when in chapter 7 punished Zion accepts the consequences of her behavior while holding confidently to the hope of vindication by YHWH (7:7–10). Of the various elements mentioned in the two passages, the willingness of the two parties to amend their behavior bears special notice (it is explicit in 4:2, and nearly explicit in the contrast of the ungodly in 7:1–6 with the 'T' of 7:7).

The other passage in which good comes to some of the nations (5:6[7]) is an interesting instance of semantic overlap with Judah's remnant (since the nations receive good) that simultaneously preserves a secondary distinction between the two (since it is the remnant that does good to the nations). As a segue toward Micah's negative presentation of the nations, we note in passing that the book's initial summons not only categorized all humanity together, but implied humanity's universal guilt. The outcome of the trial to which humanity was summoned there was not presented until various charges had been laid against Israel/Judah (chs. 1–3) and the nations (4:11–12, etc.).

This leads us to consider the negative aspect of semantic overlap between some of the nations and some of Judah. The book gives more emphasis to the judgment that will fall on Judah (1:6–7, 14–15; 2:3–5; 3:4, 6–7, 12; 4:10; 5:9–13[10–14]; 6:13–16) than to the judgment to come on the nations. The Judeans who will not escape or survive this punishment are characterized as 'having made their deeds evil' (3:4), and elsewhere are said to detest what is right (3:9), to worship other gods and images (5:11–13[12–14]), and so on. These Judahites/Israelites will be held accountable for having refused YHWH's will and for discounting his perpetual, spectacular intervention on their behalf (6:3–5), and so will suffer the covenant's curses rather than its blessings (6:14–15).

Similarly, those among the nations who will be destroyed take pleasure in Zion's disgrace (4:11), are ignorant of YHWH's plans for her (4:12), persist in their opposition to her (5:4–5[5–6]), and refuse to submit to YHWH's word (5:14[15]). Ultimately, all those outside restored Zion will be desolate (7:13) and deprived of all pride, glory, and autonomy (7:16–17).⁷⁵

75 Kessler (*Micha*, 304) is not wrong to affirm that while the image of the returnees in 7:12 is one of returning exiles, nothing prohibits non-Israelites from accompanying them. However, this qualification unnecessarily blurs the different perspectives that appear

7.4 Conclusions

Micah's treatment of the nations is as complex as his treatment of Israel/Judah. Both of these groups are subdivided according to their relationship with YHWH, and their fates correspond directly to this decisive factor. Diversity in terms of characterization and fate appears within both groups, and comes into view across a chronological shift from the present to the future. In the case of the nations, while initially none are on peaceful terms with Judah/Israel, future events will see some of them brought into harmony with restored Zion while others will remain her enemy. This diversity understandably leads some to conclude that coherence is compromised by the complexity of the nations-theme.⁷⁶

The conclusion one draws regarding the theme's coherence in Micah depends largely on the degree of complexity the interpreter is willing to see in the conceptual world of the author(s)/redactor(s). The more sophisticated or paradoxical is the thought of the one responsible for the text, the more complex or puzzling is the text he produces. Conversely, the more one imagines authors and redactors as representing only one perspective, the more likely one will seek compositional explanations of complexity.⁷⁷

Despite Micah's clear distinction of Israel/Judah from the nations on the lexical level, that simple separation becomes almost incidental as the characterization of the two groups develops across the book. As Schart summarizes it,

in 7:7–13 and 4:1–4. The focus in 7:7–13 is consistently on restored Zion and, as a binary counterpart, the nations *defined as those who suffer the consequences of their actions* (7:13). The key element seems to be the recognition that the inhabitants of Zion are those who recognize their guilt and trust in divine deliverance (7:9). This is clearly not an ethnic or national means of identification, and it is complemented by the *absence* of nations-language in 7:13, where judgment is based on deeds regardless of other aspects of one's identity. The fact that these people are not in Zion is of religious/spiritual, not geographical/political, import.

76 E.g., Roth, *Israel und die Völker*, 219, regarding the unity of Micah 4, and 221, regarding the nations-theme in Micah 4, 7.

77 E.g., Roth, *Israel und die Völker*, 221, who concludes that Micah 4, 7 cannot be systematized. Due to the improbable presupposition that different views must have distinct social, political, or religious matrices and that there exists a more or less homogenous social-political-religious matrix at a given moment, the idea of essentially contemporaneous redactors with divergent views has rarely drawn attention, but cannot be rejected out of hand.

So setzt Mi 1,2, wo die Rede davon ist, dass YHWH als Zeuge gegen die Völker auftreten wird, voraus, dass sich die Völker und damit eben auch Ninive, verschuldet haben. Auf Grund der Botschaft Micahs wird es eine Scheidung in der Völkerwelt geben. Diejenigen Völker, die auf der Feindschaft gegen YHWH und sein Volk beharren, werden gemäß der Aussage von Mi 5,14 und 7,13 gerichtet und verwüstet werden. . . . [The other group within the nations] ‘am Ende der Tage’ friedlich zum Zion strömen (Mi 4,1–4).⁷⁸

It is essential to notice that Schart, like Kessler and others, ties these varied aspects of the theme to various characterizations and different historical settings articulated by the text itself. This literary-historical orientation is essential to recognizing whatever coherence exists in Micah's discourse and the nations-theme that figures prominently in it.⁷⁹

While we leave the relation between Micah's treatment of the theme and its development elsewhere in the Twelve for a later chapter, one final point should be considered: why does Micah start with a global condemnation that uses no Israel/Judah language whatsoever (1:2) only to conclude with a vision of Zion as the only place where non-Israelites can survive the judgment the book threatens against both?⁸⁰ This contrast is especially evident in the danger that YHWH's coming poses to the whole earth in 1:2 (ארץ ומלאה) over against the distinction between Zion and ‘the earth’ in 7:12–13 (הארץ).⁸¹ Other passages in Micah raise the same question: even though the submissive nations are almost integrated into Zion (their desire to learn from and obey YHWH in chapter 4 is of primordial importance, and there is no hint that they leave Zion after their arrival in Micah 4:1–4), what connects a human being's acceptable relationship with YHWH to a particular place?

78 A. Schart, “Das Zwölfprophetenbuch als redaktionelle GroÙeinheit,” *TLZ* 133 (2008): 227–46 (242).

79 Kessler (*Micah*, 309) sums up well the link between characterization and fate with respect to the nations in Micah, as well as the variety the theme exhibits: “Die Völker ‘in all ihrer Kraft’ müssen ‘zuschanden werden’ (vgl. dazu besonders 4,11–13; 5,4–5.8.14), aber sie haben auch die Möglichkeit, JHWH ‘zittern engenzutreten’ (vgl. dazu 4,1–5). Daran, welche Möglichkeit sie ergreifen, wird sich ihre Zukunft entscheiden (vgl. dazu auch 5,6f.)”

80 This shift is an excellent example of the challenges involved in integrating the structure of the text with its semantics, and so crystallizes this study's focus on conceptual coherence.

81 Roth, *Israel und die Völker*, 219, finds the same contrast in Micah 4–5.

The answer seems to be the temple (4:1) or, more precisely, YHWH's presence there. The absolute centrality of the Jerusalem temple as the place where Yahweh dwells in Micah means that the rest of the world (spatially) falls outside the beneficent effects of his presence and is instead consigned to being a desolate wasteland (7:13). Accordingly, those who remain outside Zion rebel by doing so (cf. 5:14[15] with 4:2). While an earlier phase of the remnant-nations relationship sees good coming to the nations where they are (5:6[7]), this eventually gives way to a vision in which Zion exists as the only destination of those whom YHWH delivers from among Israel/Judah and from among the nations alike.⁸² The coherence of the nations-theme in Micah thus depends, from this vantage point, on the clarity with which the two subgroups that constitute the nations (those who submit willingly to YHWH and those who persist as long as possible in autonomous opposition)⁸³ can be correlated with the temple as the source of YHWH's invitation to learn and follow his will, and as the locus of his rule and blessing.⁸⁴ One portion of the nations experiences deliverance in direct relation to YHWH's presence while the other falls under his judgment without ever approaching it.

The complexity of Micah's treatment of the nations makes its comparison with Jonah's and Habakkuk's perspectives difficult. Jonah focuses exclusively on positive responses of non-Israelites to knowledge of YHWH/Elohim, while Habakkuk mentions no such positive responses outside Judah. Micah's challenging presentation of the nations may have played a role in the decision of those responsible for the oldest LXX collection of the Twelve to locate it elsewhere, but this is purely speculative. It is more likely, as Zapff has suggested, that Micah's placement reflects the collectors' awareness that its presentation of the nations is sufficiently sophisticated to accommodate the varied views of the neighboring books—that, at least, is not speculation.⁸⁵

82 This explanation attributes more than one phase to a coherent position on the role of Zion in the future that Micah presents, rather than presuming that 4:1–3, 6 directly contradict 7:12, *pace* Roth, *Israel und die Völker*, 221.

83 This distinction is also noted by Zapff, "The Perspective on the Nations," 307.

84 See A.L.J. Hoppe, "Zion, the City of God: Jerusalem in the Book of Psalms," in *idem*, *The Holy City: Jerusalem in the Theology of the Old Testament* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2000), 80–82. Note, more proximately, the observation of H. Utzschneider that the temple-focus in Mic 3:9–12, 4:1–7 is continued despite the shift in 4:8–5:3 to human rule, since that rule is set in Jerusalem; Utzschneider, "Micha und die Ziechen der Zeit. Szenen und Zeiten in Mi 4,8–5,3," in *Schriftprophetie* (ed. F. Hartenstein, J. Krispenz and A. Scharf; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2004), 265–82 (271).

85 Zapff, "Perspectives," 303–304.

The Nations in Nahum

While the force of Nahum's condemnation of Assyria has led some to conclude that his theology of nations other than Judah anticipates only their demise, several elements in the book (and, occasionally, the history of interpretation) suggest that such views involve oversimplification.¹ This has not prevented a general dearth of interest in this facet of the book, however.² This chapter will argue, first, that a significant portion of Nahum's theology of the nations is not articulated along national/ethnic lines by virtue of its religious and theological presentation of Nineveh. Second, since in Nahum deliverance from the Day of Yahweh is ultimately connected not with nationality or ethnicity but with trust in Yahweh, its theology allows for the deliverance of non-Israelite nations (but, interestingly, not of Assyria) and so its overall perspective on the nations is not monochromatic.

- 1 G. Fohrer (*Introduction to the Old Testament* [trans. D. Green; Nashville: Abingdon, 1968], 451) sees Nahum as simplistic and nationalistic, while D.G. Garber Jr. ("Facing Traumatic Texts: Reading Nahum's Nationalist Rage," *RevExp* 105 [2008]: 285–93) terms the book a "vengeance fantasy." 4Q169 (4QpNah) uses Nahum 3:1–9 against the Pharisees; see H.-J. Fabry, "Die Nahum- und Habakuk-Rezeption in der LXX und in Qumran," in *Wort Jhwhs, das geschah . . .* (*Hos 1,1*): *Studien zum Zwölfprophetenbuch* (ed. E. Zenger; HBS 35; Freiburg: Herder, 2002), 159–90, esp. 181.
- 2 M. Roth, *Israel und die Völker im Zwölfprophetenbuch: Eine Untersuchung zu den Büchern Joel, Jona, Micha und Nahum* (FRLANT 210; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005) and J.M. O'Brien, *Nahum* (Readings; London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 129–47, treat the topic at some length. More brief are A. Berlejung, "Erinnerungen an Assyrien in Nahum 2,4–3,19," in *Die unwiderstehliche Wahrheit: Studien zur alttestamentlichen Prophetie: Festschrift für Arndt Meinhold* (ed. R. Lux and E.-J. Waschke; ABG 23; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2006), 323–56; H.G.L. Peels, *The Vengeance of God: The Meaning of the Root NQM and the Function of the NQM-Texts in the Context of Divine Revelation in the Old Testament* (*OtSt* 31; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 199–207; B.M. Zapff, "The Perspective on the Nations in the Book of Micah as a 'Systematization' of the Nations' Role in Joel, Jonah and Nahum: Reflections on a Context-Oriented Exegesis," in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve* (ed. P.L. Redditt and A. Scharf; BZAW 325; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 292–312; and B. Becking, "Passion, Power and Protection: Interpreting the God of Nahum," in *On Reading Prophetic Texts: Gender-specific and related studies in memory of Fokkelen van Dijk-Hemmes* (ed. B. Becking and M. Dijkstra; BIS 18; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 1–20.

Without denying the insights of interpreters who have argued on the basis of various discordant features of Nahum that the book as we have it preserves various redactional levels, our focus remains the exploration of the possible conceptual coherence of its treatment of the nations, which appears in all the proposed redactional levels.³ As such the exploration is a heuristic one, and does not extrapolate from its findings on the nations-theme to the coherence or incoherence of the book as a whole.

8.1 Terminology

8.1.1 *Proper Nouns*

8.1.1.1 Nineveh

Nineveh is front and center, of course (1:1; 2:9[8]; 3:7). It is not surprising that the first element of the book's superscription identifies the book's genre as **נְשִׂא** and specifies its subject as Nineveh, although Nineveh is not explicitly referred to again until the description of its predicted fall in 2:9.

8.1.1.2 Assyria

The rich variety of metaphors and the frequent reference to specific offices in the Assyrian army and imperial administration account for the relative infrequency of the name of Assyria's last capital city and of the empire itself. The proper noun **אֲשׁוּר** occurs only in 3:18, as an absolute noun in construct with **מֶלֶךְ**.

8.1.1.3 Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon

The regions of Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon (1:4) seem to be geographic regions in the strict sense, since they are mentioned without reference to their human populations (which would have been extremely small and probably transient). Their significance is apparently tied to their importance for agriculture, forests, and pasturage.

3 K. Seybold, *Profane Prophetie: Studien zum Buch Nahum* (SBS 135; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1989), 32, sees the book's pericopes as originating between 660 (for 3:8–19a) and 400 BCE (1:2–10, 11, 14), while more moderate views question the authenticity of 1:2–8 and 1:9–2:3. The overall coherence of Nahum has been explored by B. Becking, "Divine Wrath and the Conceptual Coherence of the Book of Nahum," *SJOT* 9 (1995): 277–96.

8.1.1.4 Non-Assyrian Entities

Several cities, states, or regions outside Assyria are mentioned in the context of Nineveh's projected fall (3:8–9). In addition to Egypt, Ethiopia/Cush, Put, and Lubim (3:9) are named as its allies, while Nineveh is compared directly with No-Amon, i.e., Thebes (3:8).⁴ No mention is made of Egypt's long tradition of imperialism, making clear that the comparison is very selective.

8.1.2 גוי-Language, עם-Language, and Related Terms

In Nahum, עם refers only to Assyria's populace (3:13, 18). The root גוי appears only in 3:4, 5, where it refers to the nations that Assyria has abused and who will witness Assyria's humiliation. 'Tribe' (משפחה) occurs once in 3:4, and ממלכות once in 3:5, both denoting groups that Assyria has abused. The indeterminate 'whom' of 3:19 also refers to the nations (including Judah) upon whom Assyria's 'evil' has passed ceaselessly. The very limited, and very mixed, nature of this body of data presents us with no significant terminological pattern in the semantic field of nation/people.

8.1.3 Generic Terms

Nahum uses a number of generic terms in its opening hymn, which focuses on Yahweh's coming vengeance against his 'adversaries' (1:2) and 'enemies' (1:2, 8). The 'guilty' (1:3), a group referred to in the formulation לא ינקה drawn from Exod 34:7, is implicitly defined in covenantal or at least moral terms vis-à-vis YHWH. The hymn stresses the danger that YHWH's coming judgment poses to all on earth (כל־יִשְׁבֵּי בָהּ, 1:5), and its avoidance of national and ethnic features carries over to its very terse identification of those who can hope to escape his wrath (חֲסִי בּוֹ, 1:7).

The rest of the book focuses more or less explicitly on Assyria. An abundance of moral terms, some specific and others general, focus on various aspects of Assyria's violence against other nations and (only in 1:11) on 'wickedness' (רעה) against YHWH (parallel to בליעל).⁵ The root רעה appears again in 3:19 as a summary of Assyria's treatment of every state within her reach, and she is specifically the one who has put the yoke on Judah (1:13). This aggression also lies behind the metaphor of the lion (2:12–14[11–13]) whose den is full of

4 H.-J. Fabry, *Nahum* (HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2006), 210, notes that the oblique reference to Sennacherib's lifting of the siege against Jerusalem in Nah 1:11 implies that No-Amon also "auch Hauptstädte besiegt und zerstört werden können." Fabry suggests that the Hifil with the comparative מִן should be translated 'doing better' ('gut ergehen') instead of 'better than' ('bist du besser als'), which would remove another possible basis for moral evaluation here.

5 Compare the lists of offenses in Isa 10:7–19; 37:22–29; Zeph 2:13–15.

prey (2:13[12]). The reference to the ‘bloody city’ that is ‘full of lies and pillage’ (3:1) adds further color to the picture of Nineveh, as does the comparison of the empire with a harlot (3:4–7). The Assyrian empire is also the source of an individual characterized as בליעל in 1:11; 2:1[1:15].

In light of YHWH’s imminent reprisal against her, Assyria and Nineveh are repeatedly depicted as being under attack, in flight, and destroyed (chs. 2, 3). Finally, Nahum mentions a number of individual Assyrian figures or roles: the empire’s envoys (2:14[13]), traders (3:16), guardsmen (3:17), marshals (3:17), shepherds (a metaphor for the king as well as his highest-ranking subordinates; 3:18); king (3:18); and nobles (3:18).⁶

8.2 Characteristics of the Nations

We are now in a position to explore the identities and roles that non-Israelite nations have in Nahum. Because their role is connected to Judah’s in different ways, we will be obliged to explore Judah’s role and identity in parallel on several occasions.⁷

8.2.1 *Assyria as Judah’s Enemy*

At the time in which Nahum’s prophecy is set, Assyria was still the dominant power in the ancient Near East, though she had been weakened by rebellions in Egypt (667, 663) and especially in Babylon (652–648).⁸ Her power (1:12) and its manifestation in her present hegemony over Judah (1:14) were the expression of a highly developed military imperialism that was central to the empire’s self-image and was supported by a robust ideology.⁹ The development and maintenance of this ideology involved continuous, often violent subjugation, control,

6 The offices of the imperial administration are surveyed in R. Matilla, *The King’s Magnates: A Study of the Highest Officials of the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (NATCP XI; Helsinki: University of Helsinki and the Finnish Oriental Society, 2000).

7 This question is explored from the perspective of postcolonialism in D.C. Timmer, “Boundaries without Judah, Boundaries within Judah: Hybridity and Identity in Nahum,” *HBT* 34 (2012): 173–89.

8 Here and in the following two sections I draw with permission on a longer study of how Nahum presents Assyria, D.C. Timmer, “Nahum’s Representation of and Response to Neo-Assyria: Imperialism as a Multifaceted Point of Contact in Nahum,” *BBR* 24.3 (2014): 349–62.

9 Manasseh (sole reign 686–642) is listed “in Esarhaddon’s records as one of the Syro-Palestinian kings required at an uncertain date to provide forced labor for the purpose of transporting building materials to Nineveh for the construction of Esarhaddon’s palaces there.” I. Provan, V.P. Long, and T. Longman III, *A Biblical History of Ancient Israel* (Louisville:

and exploitation of as much territory as possible. Much of the emperors' royal annals was dedicated to a representation of this ideology in action. Note, for example, the description of the campaign of Sargon II against the rebellious Yau-bi'di of Hamath: "I mustered the masses of Assur's troops and at Qarqar, together with his warriors, I burned Qarqar. Him I flayed. I killed the rebels in the midst of those cities."¹⁰ Sennacherib's account of his 701 campaign against Eltekah and Timnah as retribution for their rebellion is similar: "I advanced to Ekron and slew its officials and nobles who had stirred up rebellion and hung their bodies on watchtowers all about the cities."¹¹ Just a few decades before the period in which Nahum is set, Esarhaddon cut short revolts by two kings in the northern Levant by decapitating them and making their decapitated heads part of a public event for an Assyrian audience: "To show the people the might of the god Assur, my lord, I hung (the heads) around the necks of their nobles and I paraded in the streets of Nineveh with singer(s) and lyre(s)."¹² As was noted in our discussion of Jonah, Assyria's violence was particularly gruesome but hardly *sui generis* in the ancient Near East.¹³ Perhaps in part for that reason, but more probably because Nahum sets Assyria's behavior within a larger religious-spiritual context, Assyria's violence *tout court* is not the goal of Nahum's critique.

Although Judah remained only an Assyrian vassal and was never completely absorbed into the empire as a province, the assertion that Nineveh had 'emptied' Jacob and Israel (2:2) evidences the effectiveness of Assyria's imperialism and the deleterious effect it typically had on the empire's vassals (3:1–3). Judah had begun vassal payments to Assyria at least as early as the reign of Ahaz (2 Kgs 16:7–10), and apart from Hezekiah's short-lived rebellion this pattern

Westminster John Knox, 2003) 274; cf. *ANET*, 291. Manasseh's forces also fought alongside Esarhaddon's during his first campaign in Egypt in 667; cf. *ANET*, 294.

10 COS 2.118E.

11 COS 2.119B. See further the references to public impaling in the Calah annals of Tiglath-Pileser III, in M. Chavalas (ed.), *The Ancient Near East: Historical Sources in Translation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 333.

12 E. Leichty, *The Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon, King of Assyria (680–669 BC)* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 17.

13 F. De Backer, "Fragmentation of the Enemy in the Ancient Near East during the Neo-Assyrian Period," in *State, Power and Violence* (ed. M. Kitts et al.; Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 2010), 393–412, which states that "Neo-Assyrian cruelty towards the enemy was not only, maybe also not usually, part of a 'thirst for blood'" (393).

was not seriously interrupted.¹⁴ The Assyrian invasion that ended Hezekiah's rebellion also compromised Judah's economy and military strength, and Judah resumed her vassalship through at least part of the reign of Manasseh, who paid tribute to Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal.¹⁵ The presence of Assyrian "religious and ideological motifs . . . on locally manufactured seals and cult objects" from the seventh century suggests that Assyrian influence in Judah only grew with time.¹⁶ This brings the reality of Judah's existence as a client state down to the time of Nahum, if we date its composition early in the period between 664/3 (the date of the fall of Thebes to which Nahum refers as past, 3:8) and 612 (the date of the fall of Nineveh that Nahum anticipates, 3:5–7). As was already mentioned, Judah was hardly alone in her role as Assyria's victim. However, the Judean focus of the book prevents the other nations from being mentioned in more than passing fashion, although in those few passages their role as victims is either affirmed (3:4, 19) or implied (3:5).

8.2.2 *Assyria as Yahweh's Enemy*

Nahum sees in Assyria's campaigns against other nations, Israel and Judah included, a fundamentally religious motivation.¹⁷ This religious element is also prominent in Assyria's own descriptions of her imperialism. Adad-Nirari II pursued his campaigns in obedience to the gods: after they made him "illustrious" and gave him kingship, he attests that "they called me to plunder the property of all the lands" and that he "tramples evildoers" in obedience to

14 See the convenient table covering roughly 750–650 BCE in J.M. Miller and J.H. Hayes, *A History of Ancient Israel and Judah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1986), 318.

15 For tribute paid to Esarhaddon, see Prism Nin. A V, 55ff.; Nin. F = Nin. S vi 7'; Rassam Cylinder; for tribute paid to Ashurbanipal, see Prism C ii 27. On Assyrian control during Manasseh's reign, see R. Gane, "The Role of Assyria in the Ancient Near East during the Reign of Manasseh," *AUSS* 35 (1997): 21–32.

16 S. Parpola, "Assyria's expansion in the 8th and 7th centuries and its long-term repercussions in the west," in *Symbiosis, Symbolism, and the Power of the Past: Canaan, Ancient Israel, and Their Neighbors from the Late Bronze Age through Roman Palaestina* (ed. W.G. Dever and S. Gitin; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 99–111 (103–104).

17 "The language justifying [Assyrian] violence and warfare was often overtly theological: the enemy violated an oath to Assur and the gods of Assyria, his mad and treacherous attack or withholding of tribute was sinful, he had no respect for the gods, he uttered blasphemies, etc." S. Holloway, *Aššur is King! Aššur is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (CHANE 10; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 73–74.

that commission.¹⁸ Ashurnasirpal II similarly described himself as the “divine weapon of the great gods” who “subjects those not submissive to him, who rules each and every person . . . with the help of the great gods.”¹⁹ This same spirit permeates Neo-Assyrian prophetic texts from the seventh century: “Fear not, Esarhaddon! I am Bel, I speak to you . . . Do not trust in humans! Lift up your eyes and focus on me! I am Ishtar of Arbela. I have reconciled Assur to you . . . Is there an enemy that has attacked you, while I have kept silent? The future shall be like the past!”²⁰

Nineveh’s dependence upon her gods, and YHWH’s personal opposition to the Assyrians as those who serve them, account for Nahum’s description of the antipathy between the two parties in terms of Assyria’s theology and attendant ethics rather than in terms of her national or ethnic identity per se. The opposition between YHWH and Nineveh appears in Nineveh’s ‘conspiring’ against Yahweh (1:9–11; cf. 2 Kgs 18–19);²¹ her idolatry (1:14, a direct offense to God that bears special notice due to the echo in 1:2 [קנא] of Yahweh’s jealousy in Exod 20:5 [קנא]); her assumed willingness to defend herself against YHWH (2:1; 3:14, 15d); her materialism (2:12–14; 3:16); and the synergy of her religion, military campaigns, and economy (cf. 3:16–17). All this prompts Yahweh to affirm his opposition to her, in the first-person, more than once (2:13; 3:5). Nahum represents Yahweh as the Creator, King and Judge of the world, while Nineveh/Assyria is rebelliously opposed to him in those roles.

8.2.3 *Yahweh as Assyria’s Enemy*

While not a direct characterization of Assyria, the fact that YHWH is presented as the enemy of Neo-Assyria means that the descriptions of Israel’s God inevitably involve further characterization of Assyria.

18 S. Melville, “Neo-Assyrian Texts 1,” in *The Ancient Near East: Historical Sources in Translation* (ed. M. Chavalas; Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 280–85 (282), from Adad-Nirari II’s annals.

19 B. Strawn, “Calah Annals Text,” in *The Ancient Near East: Historical Sources in Translation* (ed. M. Chavalas; Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 286–89 (287).

20 M. Nissinen, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* (WAW; Atlanta: SBL, 2003), 104–105.

21 R.L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi* (WBC 32; Dallas: Word, 1984), 77, notes that “V 11 may refer to Sennacherib as the one who came out of Nineveh plotting evil against Yahweh . . . (cf. 2 Kgs 18–19). However, the term Belial suggests that the human enemy, whoever he was, represented the Assyrian goddess.”

8.2.3.1 Nahum 1:2–3

The first characterization of YHWH, in 1:2a, is drawn in part from Exod 20:5: “A God jealous and avenging is Yahweh, Yahweh avenges, (he is) the Lord of wrath.” Though YHWH’s jealousy for his uniqueness is first expressed (in terms of the chronological self-presentation of the HB/OT) in the context of covenantal commands to Israel, Nahum does not hesitate to apply it to Nineveh.²² Although it has been argued that ‘lord of wrath’ expresses YHWH’s mastery of his wrath in the same way that in Biblical Hebrew an archer is the ‘lord’ of his arrows, the only other uses of בַּעַל with words in the semantic field of ‘anger/rage’ do not express this concept (Prov 22:24; 29:22).²³ These expressions, when used with reference to human beings, denote an inability to exercise self-control and thus a tendency to explosive expressions of anger.²⁴ Accordingly, the expression here, applied to YHWH, underscores YHWH’s wrath (as does the entire context), but the context also makes clear that this wrath is focused on YHWH’s enemies and so is not arbitrary.

The foci of Yahweh’s jealousy, vengeance, and wrath are ‘his’ adversaries and enemies (1:2b), which per 1:1 must include Nineveh. The possessive adjective is very important, since it maintains the general focus of the book’s opening oracle. While the rest of the book focuses on Assyria, the consistently general terminology of this opening oracle makes it clear that she is only one of the larger, generic class of Yahweh’s enemies.

The description of Yahweh’s character then draws on Exod 34:6–7 and other texts to amplify the adversarial relationship between YHWH and Assyria. The italics in the following table highlight some of the prominent differences between the two Exodus texts, while small caps identify modifications made in Nahum.²⁵

22 Pace Becking, who suggests (“Passion,” 17) that YHWH’s jealousy here is directed against “inimical powers who are injuring the Israelites.” While that element is present, YHWH’s jealousy for his glory in the face of Nineveh’s opposition and worship of other gods is predominant.

23 Peels, *The Vengeance of God*, 204, thinks the phrase means “not a blind, impulsive aggression, but a[n] essential reaction to the evil of his enemies.” W.T. Koopmans (“בַּעַל,” *NIDOTTE* 1:681–83 [682]) contends that God uses wrath as its lord like archers are “lords” of their arrows (cf. Gen 49:23), while de Moor, “בַּעַל,” *TDOT* 2:182, suggests only the general sense “owner of.”

24 B. Waltke, *Proverbs* 15–31 (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 232.

25 Even if Nahum predates Exodus 20 and/or Exodus 34 in their final forms, Nahum would still be modifying important traditions within Israel’s scriptural repertoire.

TABLE 1 *Intertextual relationships of Nahum 1:2–3*

Exodus 20:5–6	Exodus 34:6–7	Nahum 1:2–3
a jealous God, visiting the iniquity. . . .	7b yet he will by no means leave the guilty unpunished, visiting the iniquity. . . .	2 A jealous and avenging God, YAHWEH AVENGES AND IS LORD OF WRATH, YAHWEH TAKES VENGEANCE UPON HIS FOES, AND STORES UP WRATH FOR HIS ENEMIES. . . . 3b will by no means clear the guilty
	6b compassionate and gracious,	
	6c slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth	3a Slow to anger and GREAT IN POWER
6 but showing lovingkindness to thousands of generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.	7a who keeps lovingkindness for thousands of generations, <i>who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin</i> ;	

The modifications to Exodus 20 made in Exodus 34 highlight God's gracious character, his patience, and his willingness to forgive, all for Israel's good.²⁶ Nahum omits almost all of these elements and instead adds further emphasis on Yahweh's wrath while focusing it on his enemies (1:2). Nahum does preserve the statement in Exod 34:7 that 'on the other hand, he will by no means acquit the guilty,' but omits the mention of covenant-faithfulness and forgiveness in Exodus 20 and 34.²⁷

26 Cf. M. Widmer, *Moses, God, and the Dynamics of Intercessory Prayer* (FAT 2:8; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 184–85.

27 The presence in 1:3b of an explicit subject and the interruption of the first two clauses' common syntax suggest that this clause is indeed independent, and create a contrasting characterization.

8.2.3.2 Nahum 1:7

In keeping with this emphasis on retribution, the imagery of whirlwind and storm in the following verses is typical of theophanies which involve the judgment of the wicked.²⁸ The divine anger is not ultimately against the inanimate cosmos, but against sinful human beings.²⁹ Once again, despite the initial specificity provided by the focus on Nineveh in 1:1, 1:2–8 as a unit does not itself specify which members of humanity are in view.

Amid this impending destruction, 1:7 unexpectedly introduces Yahweh as a shelter. He is preeminently ‘good,’ and this goodness is evidenced by his willingness to be a shelter from judgment for those who trust in him.³⁰ In direct contrast to ‘those who trust in him’ (7c) are Yahweh’s ‘enemies’ (8b, cf. 1:2). The contrast is not only semantic but syntactic given the parallel placement of these groups at the end of their respective verses, making clear that for Nahum there are only two classes of human beings: those who trust in Yahweh (1:7), and his enemies who do not (1:8). The complete destruction of these enemies makes Nahum’s perspective all-encompassing and definitive.³¹

YHWH’s opposition to Assyria appears very clearly in two other passages in Nahum, 2:14 and 3:4–7 (Seybold dates both earlier than 1:2–10).³² These passages merit attention as the only ones outside Nahum 1 in which Yahweh

28 A. Luc, “Storm and the Message of Job,” *JST* 87 (2000): 111–23, here 113–14.

29 This connection appears with all the roots present here: זָעַם (with righteousness-language; Ps 7:11; personal acknowledgement of sin, Ps 38:4; national sin, Lam 2:6, etc.); חָמָה (for national sin, Jer 44:6; Ezek 5:13; more generally, Isa 59:8; on those who reject Yahweh’s word, Mic 5:14); and חָרָן (against those who oppose Yahweh, Exod 15:7; against sin in Israel, Num 25:4–5; Josh 7:26; and against sinners everywhere, Isa 13:9–13). The collocation אֶף חָרָן used here shows the same focus on sin, whether in Israel or among the nations. Note the variety of expressions used for the link between sin and judgment in Gen 19:1–29; Lev 26:14–45; Num 16:25–34; Deut 28:15–68; Josh 7:24–26; 2 Kgs 17:1–23; 24:20; Amos 1:3–2:16.

30 Fabry, *Nahum*, 139, observes that the ‘goodness’ of YHWH is not automatically in Judah’s favor. “Die Ambivalenz im Gottesbild besteht nicht in Gutsein versus Zorn, sondern im Gutsein als Schutz für den Guten versus Zorn zur Vernichtung des Bösen.”

31 In the latter case, the object of judgment is clearly Yahweh’s enemies, but in the former there is no explicit element in the immediate context to which ‘her’ can refer. Within the wider context, J.D.W. Watts, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk and Zephaniah* (CBC; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 105, is perhaps right to suggest that it refers to Nineveh or to her patron goddess, Ishtar, since whatever the precise referent of ‘her,’ the parallelism between ‘her place’ in 8a and ‘his enemies’ in 8b argues strongly for a related sense (and a role which Nineveh fits very well).

32 Seybold, *Profane Prophecy*, 32.

speaks in the second person, identifies himself as ‘Yahweh of Hosts,’ and says to Assyria ‘I am against you.’³³ We will consider them after turning first to series of similar statements in 1:9–14.

8.2.3.3 Nahum 1:9–14

Whether or not YHWH is the speaker here, the focus of the speech on Assyria’s opposition to YHWH and his imminent response to her aggression makes it clear that he is her mortal enemy. The statements here address a variety of objectionable behaviors on Assyria’s part, first described as ‘plotting’ (Piel חשב, 1:9, again with the adjective רעה in 1:11). Although no specific plot against YHWH is identified, Sennacherib’s attack on Judah in 701 is a plausible referent (if indeed a specific event is in mind). Biblical descriptions of this event stress how the Assyrian king set himself up against YHWH (2 Kgs 18:33, 35 // Isa 36:18, 20), and for this reason (as well as the rest of this section) we may assume that Nahum rejects such plots as calculated rejections of YHWH’s absolute and unique authority and power.³⁴ The response to the plot is therefore terse: YHWH will make a complete end of it, so that such opposition never reappears (1:9). This is further emphasized in the frustratingly obscure 1:10.

A second address to Assyria, more precisely to her king, follows in 1:14. Yahweh promises to this masculine singular subject, first, that “his name will no longer be sown.” The twin ideas of name and descendants appear with some frequency in Neo-Assyrian royal annals and similar literature.³⁵ Here we will note only two examples, beginning with an inscription of Adad-Nirari II (ca. 900) that closes a recital of his accomplishments as follows: “The one who erases my inscription and my name, may Ashur and Gula overthrow his

33 Notably, this phrase excludes Judah from the role of avenger, and the “whole course of events” in Nahum is “attributed to Yahweh (1:9, 14; 2:13; 3:5–6), patently without the aid of his own people as the instruments of destruction.” S. Sherwin, “‘I Am against You’: Yahweh’s Judgment on the Nations and its Ancient Near Eastern Context,” *TynBul* 54 (2003): 149–60, here 150.

34 This fits well what we know of Neo-Assyrian royal ideology: “It was the Assyrian monarch’s sacred obligation to explore, overcome, and incorporate [all non-Assyrian territories] into the realm of Ashur.” B.J. Parker, “The Construction and Performance of Kingship in the Neo-Assyrian Empire,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 67 (2011): 357–86 (363).

35 K. Spronk, *Nahum* (HCOT; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1997), 75, and G.H. Johnston, “Nahum’s Rhetorical Allusions to Neo-Assyrian Treaty Curses,” *BSac* 158 (2001): 415–36 (424–25), provide a number of examples.

kingship (and) make his name and his seed disappear from the land.”³⁶ Esarhaddon’s seventh-century ‘succession treaty’ transferred power to his son Ashurbanipal and threatened with curses any who would usurp the throne in his place: Assyrians “shall abolish his name and seed from the land.”³⁷ The widespread use of name-centered self-glorification on the part of Neo-Assyrian kings justifies reading 1:14 in light of such attempts at self-exaltation and legacy creation. Spronk therefore correctly notes the irony in YHWH’s promise to eradicate the Assyrian king’s name and legacy: “The message of Nahum is that YHWH takes the place of the ‘great gods’ and that the heavenly wrath is now turned against the famous Assyrian kings who shall be hit by his curse.”³⁸

Yahweh’s second divine response to the Assyrian monarch is the threat to eliminate “idol and image” from his temple.³⁹ This is equivalent to eliminating the gods themselves, since “the god and the statue were identical” for the purposes of ritual.⁴⁰ Not only does this highlight the indissoluble connection between the Assyrian king and the empire’s gods, but since such violence against deities is rarely attested in the ancient Near East, YHWH’s commitment to the complete destruction of the empire and all powers associated with it is emphasized.⁴¹

36 S. Melville, “Adad-Nirari,” in *The Ancient Near East: Historical Sources in Translation* (ed. M. Chavalas; Blackwell Sourcebooks in Ancient History; Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 285.

37 S. Melville, “The Succession Treaty of Esarhaddon,” in *The Ancient Near East: Historical Sources in Translation* (ed. M. Chavalas; Blackwell Sourcebooks in Ancient History; Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 356; S. Parpola and K. Watanabe, *Neo-Assyrian Treaties and Loyalty Oaths* (SAA 2; Helsinki: University of Helsinki Press, 1988), 35. Numerous examples of the threat to destroy a rebellious vassal’s ‘seed’ and ‘name’ also appear in the vassal treaties of Esarhaddon; see the list in Johnston, “Curses,” 425.

38 Spronk, *Nahum*, 75.

39 Note Saggs’s very similar description of cult statues and images in Assyria; H.W.F. Saggs, *The Might That Was Assyria* (Sidgwick & Jackson Great Civilizations Series; London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1984), 205.

40 F.A.M. Wiggermann, “Theologies, Priests, and Worship in Ancient Mesopotamia,” *CANE*, 1862.

41 Even Neo-Assyria, which used excessive violence against rebellious vassals in other spheres in order to discourage further rebellion, typically took the statues of the gods of conquered peoples to new temple-homes rather than destroying them. See, e.g., Esarhaddon’s mention of the capture of the gods of Adumutu by Sennacherib, who “brought [them] to Assyria,” Leichty, *Royal Inscriptions of Esarhaddon*, 19. Holloway, *Aššur is King!*, 145, suggests that only the earliest Neo-Assyrian kings presented the captured gods to their own gods as a present of sorts, while later kings “altered this policy, storing these objects at sites outside the Assyrian heartland and proffering the restoration of

The third and final divine threat against the Assyrian king in 1:14 involves Yahweh's preparation of his grave. While there is no indication that YHWH intends to dishonor the Assyrian king in the act of burial itself, the reason given for this action (and probably for the two preceding ones as well) in the final phrase of 1:14 is the insignificance of the monarch in YHWH's eyes. The simple assertion that the king is קלל (despised, insignificant, or small)⁴² stands in radical opposition to the exaggerated insistence on the king's unsurpassed importance and power in Assyrian royal ideology. As Liverani notes, in that perspective "The Assyrian kingship is the only one to legitimately exercise universal dominion," is without equal, and "is the only one endowed with those qualities which render legitimate the exercise of power."⁴³ By committing to the destruction of the king's name, legacy, gods, and very life, Yahweh asserts as emphatically as possible that his conflict with the Assyrian monarch will see the latter disappear from the world scene without leaving a trace, while YHWH emerges victorious.

8.2.3.4 Nahum 2:14

Adopting some of the same strategies in 2:14, Yahweh makes ironic reuse of Assyria's propagandistic use of lion imagery.⁴⁴ "Standard phraseology, from Tiglath-pileser I onward, portrayed royal valor in the hunt. . . . Assyrian royal tradition calls the monarch both a shepherd (divinely appointed) and a hunter (divinely endowed), able to combat lions on foot and even bare-handed," so that Tiglath Pileser I (1115–1077) boasts "I killed on foot 120 lions with my wildly

captured gods as a reward for politically correct conduct." Contrariwise, the destruction of foreign cult statues by Assyrian kings is attested only very rarely, for Sennacherib and Assurbanipal; see Holloway, *Aššur is King!*, 118–22.

- 42 These four uses express the contempt of Hagar for Sarah after Hagar conceived (Gen 16:4, 5), God's low esteem of those who despise him (1 Sam 2:30), and Job's negative self-evaluation (Job 40:4). 1 Sam 2:30 is the only other case in which YHWH makes the evaluation of the other's insignificance. Cf. J. Scharbert, "קלל," *TDOT* 13:37–44, esp. 38.
- 43 M. Liverani, "The Ideology of the Assyrian Empire," in *Power and Propaganda. A Symposium on Ancient Empires* (ed. M.T. Larsen; Copenhagen Studies in Assyriology 7; Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1979), 297–317 (310). Similarly F.M. Fales, *Guerre et paix en Assyrie: Religion et impérialisme* (Les Conférences de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études; Paris: Cerf, 2010), 71.
- 44 See G.H. Johnston, "Nahum's Rhetorical Allusions to the Neo-Assyrian Lion Motif," *BSac* 158 (2001): 287–307.

vigorous assault.”⁴⁵ Despite the long history of this tradition, one can still observe that Ashurbanipal’s court went

out of their way to broaden this theme and to contribute to its content. Never before in Assyrian art has [*sic*] the relentless quarrel between man and beast been so dramatically portrayed as it was in the hunting reliefs of the North Palace of Nineveh; and none of the hunting accounts integrated into early Neo-Assyrian historical writings matches the literary qualities of Ashurbanipal’s hunting texts.⁴⁶

Ashurbanipal’s Great Hunting Text (K 2867+) “describes at length how, prior to the arrival of the royal savior, prides of lions harassed people and animals living peaceably in the plains.” There we read that “the shepherds and herdsmen had been complaining that lions were dev[ouring in the cattle-pen(s) and] sheep-fold(s).”⁴⁷ Another of his inscriptions, 82–5–22,2 in the Kouyunjik Collection of the British Museum, portrays the king’s involvement similarly: “in the plai[n, a wide expanse]—[befo]re my arrival hug[e lions, a fier]ce [mountain breed, attacked] (there) the cattle-p[en(s)].”⁴⁸ Favorable climatic conditions had apparently expanded the hunting grounds available to lions in parts of Assyria, so that the king’s extensive lion hunts were part of his divinely-authorized role as the deliverer of his people.⁴⁹ Not content to hunt lions in the wild, Ashurbanipal also organized hunts in an arena in Nineveh. In the depiction of one such hunt on a royal stela, lions are released from cages

45 J. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008) 49, citing A.K. Grayson, *Assyrian Rulers of the Early First Millennium BC I (1114–859 BC)* (RIMA, Assyrian Periods 2; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 16 (col. VI.77–79).

46 E. Weissert, “Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph in a Prism Fragment of Ashurbanipal,” in *Assyria 1995* (ed. S. Parpola and R. Whiting; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 1997), 339–58 (339).

47 Weissert, “Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph,” 342.

48 As restored by Weissert, “Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph,” 343.

49 “Since I took my seat upon the throne of the father who begot me, Adad has sent his rains. . . . The young of the lions thrive. . . . With their roaring the hills resound. . . . As if the plague had broken loose, there were heaped up corpses of dead men, cattle and sheep. . . . In the course of my campaign into [] their lairs I broke up. . . .” D.D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 1968), 1.76 (224), cited in Johnston, “Nahum’s Rhetorical Allusions,” 300.

before being struck down by the king's arrows.⁵⁰ Insofar as it reflects historical realities like these, Yahweh's announcement that he will end Assyria's lion-like existence is double-edged. He will act against Assyria as the one who has made other nations her prey, and in doing so will also assume a role like that of the Assyrian monarch by eliminating a leonine threat against his own people.

The closing mention of the 'envoys' brings into view an element of Assyrian hegemony probably well known to some of Nahum's audience and rounds out the destruction that the prophet describes. K. Radner has argued that there may well have been an Assyrian official lodged in Jerusalem as a liason, a scenario that would add poignancy to Nahum's vision here.⁵¹ Be that as it may, the section clearly affirms that both the empire's fearsome power and those who served to formalize it will be eliminated.⁵²

8.2.3.5 Nahum 3:4–7

Finally, the threat in 3:4–7 describes Nineveh in terms of prostitution and sorcery.⁵³ Given Assyria's strong interest in various deities and modes of divination, the emphasis on sorcery is understandable. The parallel characterization of a harlot draws in part on Nineveh's attractiveness (חן טוֹבֶת הֶן, 'charming'), and both comparisons probably reflect the symbiosis of Assyrian religion, warfare, and economic activity.⁵⁴ Prostitution and witchcraft would thus be

50 See R.D. Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh, 668–627 BC* (London: British Museum Publications for the Trustees of the British Museum, 1976), plates VI–IX (Room C, north-east wall). I owe this reference to Weissert, "Royal Hunt and Royal Triumph," 354, who points out there that the king is said to have killed eighteen lions, each representing one of Nineveh's gates and so demonstrating his ability to defend the city from any attack.

51 Radner, "Assyrische *tuppi adê* als Vorbild für Deuteronomium 28,20–44?" in *Die deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerke: Redaktions- und religionsgeschichtliche Perspektiven zur "Deuteronomismus"-Diskussion in Tora und Vorderen Propheten* (ed. M. Witte et al.; BZAW, 365; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 351–78. I owe this reference to W. Morrow, "Neo-Assyrian Influences in Manasseh's Temple?," *CBQ* 75 (2013): 53–73 (55).

52 A. Berlejung notes the importance of the envoys as elements in Assyria's self-image and imperialism, and observes in summary that they "functioned as diplomats between states, negotiated treaties, presented capitulation-documents, and delivered to a vassal-king the orders of his suzerain." Berlejung, "Erinnerungen an Assyrien," 335.

53 The structure of the last two clauses of 3:4 corresponds to Berlin's AB–AB pattern in cases that attest both syntactic and semantic parallelism (but with ellipsis); cf. A. Berlin, *The Dynamics of Biblical Parallelism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 84.

54 Apart from the obvious divine involvement in Assyrian military endeavors and the direct financial benefit that accrued to her as victor, these elements are intertwined on the level of culture as well. S. Parpola, "National and Ethnic Identity in the Neo-Assyrian Empire

metaphorical for the empire's relations with other nations, in which their spoils are analogous to the fees paid to a harlot. In this metaphor the nations become the property of Assyria (she sells them to herself, as it were), and the material wealth she gains is analogous to the pleasure enjoyed by the harlot (and, in this context, by her alone).⁵⁵

An intriguing similarity exists between this characterization of Nineveh and several of Ishtar's prominent features.⁵⁶ Though her character underwent significant development across several millennia, by the time of Nahum varied and even antithetical attributes had been fused in her identity as a goddess of sexual attraction, war, and prostitutes.⁵⁷ Hence in much Neo-Assyrian royal ideology Ishtar "provides the king with economic blessings as well as power and victory in war," with the former frequently the product of the latter.⁵⁸ This warrior aspect appears alongside Ishtar's self-presentation as a prostitute in the Inanna Hymn 1 of the second millennium, in which Inanna/Ishtar says of herself, "When I stand in the mouth of the battle, I am indeed also the foremost one of all lands. When I stand in the thick of battle, I am indeed also the very guts of battle, the heroic strength. . . . When I sit by the gate of the tavern I am a prostitute . . . ; the friend of a man, the girlfriend of a woman."⁵⁹ The importance of Ishtar of Nineveh during the reign of Assurbanipal, and for

and Assyrian Identity in Post-Empire Times," *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies* 18 (2004): 5–22, here 15, summarizes the situation thus: "The common religion, culture, world-view and value system, and above all, the common unifying language (Imperial Aramaic) effectively set Assyria apart from the rest of the world and created a feeling of unity and solidarity within the country. . . . the dualistic ideology of the Empire . . . saw Assyria as the kingdom of God commissioned to spread the light of civilization to the world surrounding it."

55 As T. Renz suggests, "Nahum, Book of" in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (ed. K. Vanhoozer; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 527–28 (528), "Nineveh is not depicted as an ordinary prostitute making a living, let alone as a sexually liberated and self-confident woman. Rather, she is a source of ensnarement and thinks nothing of selling peoples for her pleasure."

56 The emendation of MT's צַבִּי וְהַצֵּב suggested by M. Delcor, "Allusions à la déesse Istar en Nahum 2,8?," *Bib* 58 (1977): 73–83, is suggestive as a reference to the stripping from Ishtar's image of her jewels and accoutrements, and would anticipate 3:4–6, but has not gained wide acceptance.

57 T. Abusch, "Ishtar," *DDD* 452–53.

58 Abusch, "Ishtar," 453. See S. Melville, "Assurbanipal," in *The Ancient Near East: Historical Sources in Translation* (ed. M. Chavalas; Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 360–68 (367), for a typical list of spoils.

59 From the Inanna Hymn 1, accessed online at <http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.4.07.9#>, 1 October 2010, cited in I.E. Reigner, *The Vanishing Hebrew Harlot: the*

Assurbanipal himself, makes it quite plausible to see the characterization of Nineveh and her bellicose patron deity as overlapping.⁶⁰

This same overlap between Ishtar's image and the behavior of the empire seems to be present in the construal of Nineveh's shame in 3:5. While her shame there is produced by the exposure of her nakedness, the focus is not on her as a sexual object but as one who has been shamed in her metaphorical role as a prostitute who exploits and destroys others for her own satisfaction.⁶¹ From Nahum's point of view, the empire has claimed all the prerogatives of deity, yet has been shown to be a mere creature, so will suffer the shame that follows the exposure of such arrogance. The probable overlap between Ishtar and Nineveh suggests that the book's presentation of Nineveh/Assyria responds to her on the terms of her self-presentation as a worshipper of Ishtar who bears a resemblance to the one she worships, reemphasizing the prominence of religious elements in Assyria's imperialism and in YHWH's reaction to it.

8.3 Analysis

8.3.1 *Lexical Overlap or Separation between Judah and the Nations or Assyria*

There is no instance of lexical overlap in Nahum that might indicate transformation or other proximate relationships between Judah and Assyria. However, several non-national terms are used to establish similarity between Judah and other victims of Assyrian imperialism, such that Judah is most likely among the nations (גוים) and kingdoms (ממלכות) referred to in 3:3–5.

adventures of the Hebrew stem ZNH (Studies in Biblical Literature 73; New York: Peter Lang, 2009), 32.

60 B.N. Porter reminds us that Ishtar of Nineveh nursed Assurbanipal, who calls her "the mother who bore me, endowed me with unparalleled kingship." Porter, "Ishtar of Nineveh and Her Collaborator, Ishtar of Arbela, in the Reign of Assurbanipal," *Iraq* 66 (2004): 41–44 (41–42). J. Reade, "The Ishtar Temple at Nineveh," *Iraq* 67 (2005): 347–390, notes that Assurbanipal "restored and decorated with glazed bricks the *bit akitu* of the goddess which had been built by Sargon" and that "he decorated Emashmash, the Ishtar Temple, with gold and silver, and . . . worked on the ziggurat and outer doors" (381).

61 Pace O'Brien, *Nahum*, 69, who uses this metaphorical public humiliation to characterize "Yahweh . . . as a man who sexually assaults Nineveh." The reaction in 3:7 that follows the 'prostitute's' exposure lacks any sexual element whatsoever, focusing exclusively on Nineveh's complete devastation. Further, the focus of the parallel action in 3:6 is the shaming function of stripping (as opposed to its possible pornographic function), as it is also in similar treaty curses (e.g., Sefire IA, 40–41).

8.3.2 *Semantic Overlap between Judah and Nations other than Assyria*

All non-Israelite nations other than Assyria share with Judah an important identifying characteristic as Assyria's victims. With this optic the book bypasses all critique of the other nations that Assyria has exploited, subjugated, or destroyed. The fact that Nahum mentions these other nations and groups without mentioning their sins (contrast Amos 1) is clear evidence that the book characterizes these nations very selectively. The idealized 'nations' (other than Assyria) are thus comparable (albeit not identical) to Judah, which is similarly idealized. This shared characteristic makes all these nations, Judah included, valid referents of the book's closing line: 'upon whom has your evil not passed continually?'⁶² The fate of all these nations, Judah and the others alike, consists of deliverance from Assyrian domination and violence.

8.3.3 *Semantic Distinction between Judah and Assyria*

Nahum's depiction of Assyria is monochromatic and entirely negative. As such, there can be no overlap between Judah and Assyria, especially since the book presents idealizations or stereotypes of the two nations that are not objective. The contrast between Assyria and Judah is explicit and far-ranging, and includes the following oppositions: Judah is a vassal while Assyria is the suzerain; Judah's troubles are ending while Assyria's are only beginning (1:15); Judah is the victim while Assyria is the aggressor; Judah is implicitly fair and non-violent in her relations with other nations, while Assyria is violent, unfair, and exploitative; and Judah's religion is YHWHistic and aniconic while Assyria's is iconic and polytheistic.⁶³ This multifaceted semantic distinction entails equally distinct fates: Assyria's doom is sure, and that ensures Judah's deliverance from her clutches.

8.4 Conclusions

Nahum's approach to the nations is bifocal but only partially static. It is bifocal in that Assyria is distinguished from every other non-Israelite nation, while Judah shares prominent characteristics with every non-Israelite nation except Assyria. It is dynamic not in terms of characterization, since neither Judah nor any of the non-Israelite nations undergo any transformation, but only in terms of the chronological shift from the present to the future. That temporal

62 Cf. Becking, "Power," 18.

63 This list draws in part on Timmer, "Boundaries within Judah," 178–79.

dynamism foresees Assyria's destruction and the liberation of Judah and the other nations who have been the victims of her violent oppression.

The unusual overlap between Judah and the vast majority of the non-Israelite nations merits closer examination. As we have seen, these nations are described only as Assyria's victims, and no moral characterization or condemnation of them is offered. In light of the fact that deliverance by YHWH is discussed without reference to nationality (cf. 1:7), one could say that deliverance is possible for most of the nations, while leaving Assyria in a class by herself.⁶⁴ The centrality and coherence of the two-sided theme of divine judgment and deliverance in the Day of Yahweh also favor letting this bifocal perspective on the nations stand, as Scoralick and Becking have suggested.⁶⁵

Looking beyond the book of Nahum to its place in the collection of the Twelve, some intriguing questions arise.⁶⁶ First, with respect to Nahum's singling out of one nation for punishment while promising deliverance to others, Habakkuk is the closest analogue.⁶⁷ In its most developed eschatological section (Nah 1:2–8), Nahum presents diametrically opposed fates for groups defined without nations-language, while the corresponding section of Habakkuk (3:1–15) identifies all the 'nations' as the object of future judgment while the rest of the book presents all nations other than Babylon as Babylon's victims. A number of other voices in the Twelve introduce with more clarity a future distinction within the larger whole of the nations, notably Amos, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.⁶⁸

64 This thought is developed in D. Timmer, "Nahum, Prophet of the God Who Avenges Injustice," in *The Lion Has Roared: Theological Themes in the Prophetic Literature of the Old Testament* (ed. H.G.L. Peels and S.D. Snyman; Eugene: Pickwick, 2012), 79–86, esp. 84–85.

65 R. Scoralick, *Gottes Güte und Gottes Zorn: die Gottesprädikationen in Exodus 34,6f und ihre intertextuellen Beziehungen zum Zwölfprophetenbuch* (HBS 33; Freiburg: Herder, 2002), 196; Becking, "Divine Wrath."

66 See K. Spronk, "Jonah, Nahum, and the Book of the Twelve: A Response to Jakob Wöhrle," *JHS* 9 (2009): article 8, R. Kessler, "Nahum-Habakuk als Zweiprophetenschrift: Eine Skizze," in *Wort Jhwhs, das geschah . . .* (Hos 1,1): *Studien zum Zwölfprophetenbuch* (ed. E. Zenger; HBS 35; Freiburg: Herder, 2002), 149–58, and W. Dietrich, "Three Minor Prophets and the Major Empires: Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives on Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah," in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve. Methodological Foundations—Redactional Processes—Historical Insights* (ed. R. Albertz, J. Nogalski, and J. Wöhrle; BZAW 433; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 147–56.

67 While Obadiah focuses exclusively on Edom, Edom's fall is not said there to benefit anyone other than Judah. Jonah similarly focuses on Assyria but says nothing explicit about the rest of Israel's world.

68 Here we leave aside Jonah due to its focus on the present rather than the future.

Second, while some argue that Jonah affirms that Assyria will not be judged and that it therefore stands in opposition to Nahum, there is no real tension between the two. I argued earlier with respect to Jonah that Nineveh's repentance was partial, and in Nahum Assyria does not even receive a call to repentance—her time has come. This element is understandable in light of Nahum's presentation of (later) Nineveh/Assyria as fully committed to opposition to YHWH in the pursuit of a global empire under the dominion of its gods and the king who implements their will.

The Nations in Habakkuk

The diversity of Habakkuk's literary genres and perspectives (to mention but two points) make the task of understanding how far its presentation of the nations can be synthesized a challenging one.¹ E. Otto proposed a synthesis of the book's theology on the basis of a redactional-critical fission of the whole into coherent parts,² while others have argued for its unity as it stands and still others propose cultic or form-critical grounds for the book's unity.³

Our study will follow the literary order of the book, beginning with the issue of wickedness in Judah, then moving through Babylon's role as the divine instrument for punishing Judah's wickedness to the characterization of Babylon as an embodiment of wickedness and the nations as her victims.⁴ The global eschatology of 3:1–15 introduces a marked shift in perspective. Judah and Babylon disappear from the scene, and the hymn refers to two different groups, the 'nations' over against YHWH's 'people' and 'anointed'. The following sections will probe these and other details before evaluating the possibility of their interrelation and coherence.

9.1 Terminology

9.1.1 גוי-Language

The most prominent sphere of reference in Habakkuk that falls within the scope of this study is 'the nations' (הגוים, 1:5, 17; 2:5 [in parallel with עמים and both with כל], 8; 3:6, 12). The plural form in chapters 1–2 is reserved for non-Israelite nations other than Babylon, while the singular גוי appears only in 1:6, as part of a description of Babylon. In chapter 3 the nations-category arguably subsumes Babylon, since both are identified with the key term רשע (1:13; 3:13).

1 F.I. Andersen, *Habakkuk: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 25; New York: Doubleday 2001), 244, sees a progression from עמים/גוים (2:5, 8) to עמים (2:10) to אמים/עמים (2:13), but suggests only that it "provides links among the first three 'woe oracles'."

2 E. Otto, "Die Theologie des Buches Habakuk," VT 35 (1985): 274–95.

3 O. Dangel, "Habakkuk in Recent Research," CR:BS 9 (2001): 131–68, especially 135–39.

4 While some dispute the centrality of Babylon in Habakkuk, particularly in the woe oracles of chapter 2, Babylon correlates best with the anonymous subject of the woe oracles and the book's chronological setting.

In chapters 1–2, where Babylon is distinguished from all other nations, those nations (thus including, at least potentially, Judah) are described as Babylon's 'captives' (1:9) and as metaphorical fish in its net (1:14–17), despite what the prophet believes to be their superior righteousness (1:13). These victims are also described in generic terms as 'humanity' (אדם, 1:14) or 'all (humanity)' (כלה, 1:15). These expressions underline the scope of Babylon's empire or at least of its ambitions, particularly from Nebuchadnezzar onward.⁵ The more precise 'many nations' (גוים רבים) in 2:8 does little to reduce the scope of Babylon's imperial project.⁶

In the global context of the theophany of chapter 3, the 'nations' (apparently inclusive of Babylon, which is not mentioned) are startled by YHWH in 3:6, and are 'trampled' (דוש) by him in 3:12. This group of nations is labeled 'the house of the wicked' in the parallel line of 3:13, where it is the object of the verb מצח, with YHWH again as verbal subject. The contrasting group there and throughout the theophanic hymn is 'your people,' inclusive of 'your anointed' (3:13).

9.1.2 *Peoples (עַמִּים and Related Language)*

The plural noun עַמִּים is often a simple synonym for 'nations' in Habakkuk. It appears, prefaced by 'all,' in 2:5, in parallel with 'all nations' (כל־הגוים). Its use in 2:10, with the adjective 'many,' parallels the 'many nations' in 2:8. Since these uses refer to the peoples or states impacted by Babylon's imperial efforts, they include not only non-Israelite groups but Judah as well. When used in the singular, עַם can refer either to YHWH's people (3:13) or to the Babylonians in their role as invaders of Judah (3:16).

There is one unusual formulation that uses עַם-language: בל־יתר עמים (2:8). This could refer either to those portions of the conquered nations that survived a Babylonian attack (e.g., the Judeans mentioned in 2 Kgs 25:11, with the

5 B. Arnold, following D. Vanderhooft, argues that with Nebuchadnezzar "a new Babylonian imperialism emerged in which hegemony became the means by which the king could fulfill his obligation" to sustain Babylon's cult and fulfill his mandate to shepherd all humanity while elevating Babylon's status as the world's city. Arnold, *Who Were the Babylonians?* (SBLABS 10; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 96.

6 W. Herrmann's argument that the description of the forces that oppress the nations in Hab 1:5–11 "in gar keiner Weise hinsichtlich der Babylonier unter Nabopolassar und Nebukadnezar II passt" stands on rather selective argumentation built on a very small bit of text, and so is not convincing. See Herrmann, "Das unerledigte Problem des Buches Habakkuk," VT 51 (2001): 481–96 (492).

singular), or to nations that Babylon did not conquer.⁷ Either way the sense is that non-Babylonian groups will play a role in her *quid pro quo* retribution. The term לאֻם appears only once, in 2:13 and in the plural, and appears to differ little from עַם, the parallel term there. Both terms describe the nations other than Babylon as working and wearying themselves for nothing in the face of Babylon's success (cf. 2:12).⁸

9.1.3 *Babylon*

'Among the nations' is Babylon (הַכַּשְׂדִּים, 1:6, only here). Babylon too is a 'nation' (1:6), but is also distinct within that group (and, from this point on, separate from it) because of the role she has already played as their scourge (1:17) and because of her future role as the one who will punish Judah's sin. Babylon is also distinguished from Judah and the rest of the nations as the target of divine retribution against her in Habakkuk 2.⁹ Babylon hyperbolically collects *all* of the nations like fish in a net (1:17; 2:5, where גוֹיִם and עַמִּים in parallel), and is said to have looted many nations (2:8, with גוֹיִם) and cut off many peoples (2:10, with עַמִּים).

9.1.4 *Other Regions or Nations*

It is interesting that the only explicit mention of non-Israelite nations other than Babylon occurs outside the Babylon-focused chapters 1–2. This is most likely because these earlier chapters focus on Babylon as *sui generis* because of its violence and its coming punishment by God. This isolation of Babylon temporarily puts the rest of the non-Israelite nations and Judah in the same category—they are or will be its victims. The equivalence of all non-Babylonian nations is especially clear in 1:13–17, where humanity and the nations are

7 D. Schibler, *Le livre de Michée* (CEB 11; Vaux-sur-Seine: Edifac, 1989), 108–109, and B. Waltke, *A Commentary on the Book of Micah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 280–81, exegete יֵתֵר אַחֲזִי in Mic 5:2 by reasoning that יֵתֵר focuses on the whole to which a שְׂאֵרִית attaches. Here the same sense is plausible, as all those that remain of the nations once Babylon's aggression against them is over will oppose Babylon. Historically, however, there is little evidence that the constituent groups of the Medo-Persian alliance that conquered Babylon had been previously subjected to its aggression; see A. Kuhrt, *The Ancient Near East c. 3000–330 BC* (2 vols.; Routledge History of the Ancient World; London: Routledge, 2006), 659.

8 As Andersen notes, *Habakkuk*, 244, this understanding is consistent with the use of גוֹי language elsewhere in chapters 1–2, where 'the nations' are habitually Babylon's victims. See J.J.M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 123. For a different understanding, see M. Floyd, *Minor Prophets Part 2* (FOTL 22; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 143.

9 This is one of several elements shared by Habakkuk's and Nahum's treatments of the nations.

comparatively 'more righteous' than Babylon, who kills and swallows them up. The mention of Lebanon in 2:17 most likely refers to it as a forest area whose lumber and wildlife Babylon has exploited, but no people group is in view (cf. Isa 14:8; the reference to 'human blood' thus parallels 2:8 but functions literally, not literally, here).¹⁰

We come now to the specific mention a number of non-Israelite regions or groups in the context of YHWH's theophanic judgment, evidently past in some cases and future in others. These include Teman (3:3), in parallel with Mount Paran; Mount Paran (3:3), in parallel with Teman; Cushan (3:7), in parallel with the land of Midian; and the land of Midian (3:7), in parallel with Cushan. The Teman-Mount Paran pair in 3:3 indicates God's point of departure, and merits no further attention here.¹¹ By contrast, the shaking of the nations in 3:6 is focused on human beings, consistent with its sense elsewhere. While the precise nuance of the phrase here depends on numerous text-critical and contextual factors, the general idea is clear: YHWH comes in judgment upon nations who are ill-prepared to resist.¹² This appears from the subjective effects of the theophany in 3:7, which are seen in connection with two groups in particular, Cushan and Midian. Cushan is not to be confused with Cush, since the other place-names in that context and the Middle Bronze Egyptian cognate *Kushu* all refer to southern Transjordan.¹³ Midian, for its part, typically refers to the northwestern corner of the Arabian peninsula.¹⁴

9.1.5 *Generic Terms*

Generic terms include Babylon's creditors and 'those who will make you tremble' (2:7); 'humans,' 'the land,' and 'a city and all residing in it' (2:8); 'neighbors'

10 Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 125, suggests that since the forests of Lebanon were considered to belong to YHWH (Ps 104:16), Babylon's use of this resource for construction of a temple to Marduk is "a mark of hubris." An account of Nebuchadnezzar's exploitation of the Lebanon appears in *ANET*, 307; notably, he asserts that its population was "scattered . . . had fled to a far (away region)" and that "a foreign enemy was ruling [over it] and robbing (it of) its riches."

11 Mount Paran may be synonymous with Sinai, but their equation is contested. S. Ahituv equates them in "The Sinai Theophany in the Psalm of Habakkuk," in *Birkat Shalom* (ed. C. Cohen et al.; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 225–32 (227). Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 159, is less inclined to do so.

12 For a thorough discussion of the text-critical issues, see Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 307–310.

13 Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 312; similarly F.F. Bruce, "Habakkuk," in *Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, and Habakkuk* (vol. 2 of *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*; ed. T. McComisky; 3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 831–96 (884).

14 M.A. Phelps, "Midian," *EDB*, 896–97.

(2:15); ‘humans,’ ‘the land,’ and ‘a city and all residing in it’ (2:17). Habakkuk 3 has only one comparable term, the ‘house of the wicked’ (3:13).

The use of *בְּרָא* in 2:14 merits notice as a paradigm even more comprehensive than the nations, whether they are distinguished from Babylon (as in chs. 1–2) or from YHWH’s people (as in ch. 3). That all human beings are in view in 2:14 is clear from the fact that ‘knowledge of the glory of YHWH’ (cf. Isa 11:9) will be in evidence across the world. The intertextual connection to Isaiah 11 allows us to postulate that knowledge of YHWH here entails a peace that contrasts sharply with Babylon’s violence (Hab 2:12). Comparable uses of *בְּרָא* appear in 2:20 (and perhaps 3:3, 6, 12), while elsewhere it refers to territory rather than to inhabitants (1:6; 2:8, 17; 3:7, 9).

9.2 Characteristics

9.2.1 *Babylon as the Means of Judah’s Punishment*

We begin with the simplest facet of Babylon’s identity in Habakkuk, her role as the instrument of divine punishment of Judah’s sin. Babylon is part of God’s solution to the apparently tardy covenant-discipline that Habakkuk longs for in the book’s opening verses (1:2–4).¹⁵ Although Babylon is at least as ‘violent’ as Judah (cf. 1:9 with 1:2), it will rise up against her for punishment.¹⁶

This announcement is a source of consternation for the prophet, who thinks that Judah is morally superior to Babylon. It seems, however, that the book as a whole does not support this evaluation on the part of the prophet. Note, for example, that God characterizes Babylon as pursuing ‘violence’ (*חַמַּס*, 1:9; cf. 2:8, 17) after Habakkuk has used the same term to characterize Judah (1:2, 3). Similarly, Habakkuk’s second complaint characterizes Babylon as wicked (*רָשָׁע*, 1:13), but he has already used the same lexeme to describe the majority in Judah (1:4).¹⁷ Further, deliverance is never guaranteed to Judah as a whole, but

15 I disagree with Sweeney that the Babylonians are the cause of the injustice within Judah in Hab 1:2–4. Were that the case, Habakkuk would have no reason to compare Babylon unfavorably with Judah (1:12–13), and it seems inevitable that Habakkuk would have pointed out the paradox of using Babylon to punish injustice which it caused itself. See M.A. Sweeney, “Structure, Genre, and Intent in the Book of Habakkuk,” *VT* 41 (1991): 63–83 (68).

16 The first divine response does not explicitly state that Judah is Babylon’s target, but the protest of 1:2–4 (Judah’s uncorrected sin) and Habakkuk’s understanding of 1:5–11 (in 1:12–2:1) make clear that this is the case.

17 Sweeney avers that “this oppression of the ‘righteous’ by the ‘wicked’ is . . . the primary reason for the prophet’s complaint,” “Structure, Genre, and Intent,” 66.

only to those who trust in the vision which centers on God's ultimate justice. While this means that the punishment of Babylon described in chapter 2 does not constitute a divine concession that Judah is morally superior, the divine punishment of Babylon is still a significant step toward the realization of the complete and final justice anticipated by the theophanic hymn. It also makes Babylon Yahweh's enemy, a role that is transferred to the 'nations' whom he finally destroys in the eschatological theophany.

9.2.2 *Babylon as God's Enemy*

Despite her utility as a means of punishment, Babylon's participation in Judah's punishment ultimately entails her own demise. Her destruction is attributed to her extensive violence against other nations, although her imminent attacks on Judah and Jerusalem would presumably only add to her culpability. Throughout Habakkuk 1–2, Babylon is singled out from among the nations she has plundered and pillaged (2:8, 10) as characteristically violent and unjust. Babylon's pride and idolatry are her determining characteristics, however. She is presented as the archetypical 'proud' opponent of God (2:5), and the taunt-song's last stanza focuses on her idolatry (2:18–19).

The extensive characterization of Babylon in Habakkuk 1–2, which distinguishes in a relative way her wickedness from that of Judah and the other nations, is central to Habakkuk's theology of the nations and to the development of that theme in the book. After focusing on the terrifying effectiveness of the Babylonian army (1:5–10; cf. 1:17), the focus shifts gradually toward a moral or religious evaluation. This appears in 1:6, where Babylon is described as 'that bitter and hasty nation that walks the breadth of the earth to possess dwellings that do not belong to it;' in the affirmation in 1:7 that 'its judgment and dignity¹⁸ come from itself;' and in its obsession with violence (1:9).

This moral critique is developed in earnest from 1:11 onward. The list of negative characteristics is impressive: idolatry (1:11, also 1:16; 2:18–19), pride (2:5), insatiable appetite for gain (2:5, 6), violence and plundering (after 1:9, in 1:15; 2:8, 12, 17), coveting (2:9, 10), self-deification (2:9), pursuit of security via conquest (2:9–11), iniquity (2:12), obsession with building cities (2:12–14), sexual exploitation (2:15–16), abuse and scorn of others (1:15, 17; 2:15–17), and idolatry (2:18–19).

While a number of elements are repeated in these sections, idolatry is arguably predominant since it forms a rough inclusion around the section and

18 Or "sovereignty/majesty/elevation/exaltation/lifting up," cf. *K-B*, 1301. Of the 12 uses, apart from 'swellings' (תנש) in Leviticus 13, it is used of God (Job 13:11; 31:23), Leviathan (Job 41:25), the tribe of Reuben (Gen 49:3), and the just (Ps 62:5).

appears within it as well. The first mention of Babylon's religious orientation appears in 1:11b: 'he will become guilty whose strength is his god/is a god to him.'¹⁹ The logical order of the elements in the context (coming for battle, taking captives, setting siege and moving onward) and the change in verbal syntax from an unprefixed perfect followed by a consecutive imperfect (חלף . . . ויבער) to a prefixed perfect (ואשם) suggest that this theological reflex refers to the whole process and specifically to an attitude underlying it. Babylon will be held guilty because she attributes her military success to her god(s), or because her might effectively plays the role of a god. In either case, her disposition or orientation is idolatrous.

Habakkuk returns to the religious facet of Babylon's actions in 1:16, affirming that she worships her own military ability. After ensnaring all of humanity in its net, Babylon 'sacrifices to his net, and makes offerings to his dragnet.'²⁰ If the sacrifice is literal, it was likely offered to Babylon's god(s), but we should bear in mind Andersen's caution that "We need not suppose that this description was intended to describe any actual ceremony in Babylonian religion, because the fishing tackle is only a metaphor. The analogy could be acts of devotion to weapons of war."²¹

The fifth woe returns once more to the topic of idolatry with a very blunt critique. The gods they represent, like the idols themselves, are mute, immobile, and powerless. Yahweh, by contrast, is active against those gods as he orchestrates Babylon's downfall. The affirmation of Yahweh's uniqueness in 2:20 suggests that however great might be Babylon's prowess, and however great may appear her gods, he alone is capable of ruling the world and of establishing justice.

Despite its bold colors, Habakkuk's characterization of his nation's Babylonian enemy is not xenophobia or misrepresentation. On the contrary, it corresponds to Babylon's self-presentation, particularly concerning the role of the empire and its deities in military exploits. The Nabopolassar Epic records the crowning of Nabopolassar as king, at which time Nabopolassar replies (most likely to Bel), "With the standard I shall constantly conquer [*your*] enemies, I shall place [*your*] throne in Babylon." The officials who witness his

19 Hebrew וְ can be either a common demonstrative pronoun or a relative particle, *K-B*, 266.

20 Note especially the Stele of the Vultures from Sumerian Lagash in which the captives of Eannatum are in a net. Cf. R.D. Haak, *Habakkuk* (VTSup 44; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 51; O. Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (trans. T. Hallett; London: SPCK, 1978), 235–38.

21 Andersen, *Habakkuk*, 185.

accession later say, "O lord, O king, may you live forever! [May you conquer] the land of [your] enemies! May the king of the gods, Marduk, rejoice in you!"²²

9.2.3 *'The Nations' as Babylon's Victims (Chs. 1–2)*

It is important to remember that not all non-Israelite nations are like Babylon as it is described in Habakkuk 1–2. It is possible to infer that if both Judah and Babylon are characteristically 'wicked' (1:4, 13), so too are the other nations, but Habakkuk does not draw this inference. Rather, without affirming their innocence (and, in the case of Judah, having affirmed its guilt), the nations whom Babylon strikes are routinely described only as its victims, with imagery that focuses on their helplessness (e.g., like fish in a net). These nations, moreover, have been unfairly deprived of their material wealth, not to mention the loss of life that typically accompanied such aggression.

9.2.4 *'The Nations' as God's Opponent (3:1–15)*

As one moves from Habakkuk 2 to Habakkuk 3:1–15, no transition is more surprising than that involving the nations (thus far used to refer to states other than Babylon). Whereas in Habakkuk 1–2 they were helpless, not explicitly guilty, and characteristically the victims of Babylonian military violence, in chapter 3 they become the object of direct aggression on the part of YHWH himself. The theme of the nations is radically dynamic at this point. What might account for this, particularly since the majority of exegetes do not consider Habakkuk 3 a secondary addition to the book?²³

We seem to be confronted with one portion of the book (chs. 1–2) that not only tolerates nations that are not aggressors, but implicitly announces their deliverance from Babylonian violence, while the following portion (3:1–15) tolerates no polities outside Judah led by its anointed.²⁴ This contrast may be helpful as an abstraction, but it is an abstraction which obscures key elements of the text that, in chapters 1–2 as well as in 3:1–15, suggest a more complex presentation of these two groups. A salient clue to understanding the perspectival discontinuity between chapters 1–2 and 3:1–15 appears in the varying nations-language used throughout the book of Habakkuk. The pertinent data are contrasted in the following table.

22 A.K. Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts* (Toronto Semitic Texts and Studies 3; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 85.

23 Dangl, "Habakkuk in Recent Research," 146.

24 This resembles in some ways Otto's arguments ("Die Theologie des Buches Habakuk," 290) for the book's composition, e.g., his theory of an exilic anti-Babylonian layer (in 1:15–17, etc.) due to the difficulty of integrating divine actions in empirical-political history.

TABLE 2 *Relationship between Habakkuk 1–2 and Habakkuk 3:1–15*

Chapters 1–2	3:1–15
Babylon is prominent throughout as God's enemy	Babylon is not mentioned ²⁵
Babylon merits divine judgment as 'wicked,' 1:13	The nations merit divine judgment
The nations are Babylon's helpless, exploited victims	The nations are 'wicked,' 3:12 // 13
Those delivered by the judgment of Babylon are all non-Babylonian nations	Those delivered by the judgment of the nations are YHWH's people and his anointed

While some might argue that Babylon is only mentioned in 1:5, and that the term's absence from Habakkuk 3 is therefore of little significance, Babylon is referred to repeatedly, and in various ways, throughout chapters 1–2. Further, in chapters 1–2 Babylon is consistently contrasted with the nations she has assaulted or will assault. By contrast, in the hymn of 3:1–15 neither Babylon nor Judah are mentioned. Rather, it is the nations as a generic category who merit judgment as those who are 'wicked,' and those whom YHWH will deliver are simply labeled his 'people' or 'anointed.'²⁶

A second clue to understanding the dynamism of the nations-theme is evident in the global perspective of 3:1–15 in contrast to chapters 1–2, which focused on Babylon and her neighbors near the end of the seventh century.²⁷

25 'Babylon' appears nowhere in the theophany itself, and is referred to only obliquely in 3:16.

26 The relationship between the specific and the general in oracles against the nations can point in either direction, and the point here is not to argue for a particular historical development that led to the book as we have it. The book of Habakkuk simply makes the coming judgment of Babylon part of a larger program in which God will resolve injustice and establish righteousness on a global scale. See P. Raabe, "The Particularizing of Universal Judgment in Prophetic Discourse," *CBQ* 64 (2002): 652–74, for a helpful overview and reconsideration of the question.

27 Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 151, argues that while 3:3–7 "includes the heavens (v. 3b), it is nevertheless largely earthbound and local in its focus. . . . The perspective in the second episode [3:8–19a] is, in contrast, relatively cosmic and universal." While there is some validity to this distinction, Floyd's own articulation of it is qualified, and the use of 'earth'

Hab 3:1–15 presents the theophany as God’s culminating but hardly unprecedented intervention for his people.²⁸ Language that echoes the exodus from Egypt (Hab 3:5, cf. Exod 9:3), the crossing of the Reed Sea (Hab 3:10, cf. Exod 14:22), the Sinai theophany (Hab 3:4, cf. Exod 19:16–18), and the divinely-enabled entry of Canaan (Hab 3:11; cf. Josh 10:12–14) does not preface, but constitutes, much of the theophany that Habakkuk witnesses. Roberts draws attention to Habakkuk’s use of imperfective forms over against the perfective forms (preceded by infinitives or not) found in related texts (Deut 33:2–5; Exod 15:10–16; Jdg 5:4–5; Ps 68:8–9) as evidence of its future aspect, and stresses that the initial chronological setting established by Hab 3:3 favors seeing this chain of theophanies in the “present-future.”²⁹

At this point we pause to consider a counter-argument: does not the reuse in Habakkuk 3 of interventions against specific, ancient enemies of Israel make the presence of ‘nations’ language and the absence of ‘Babylon’ inevitable there? In other words, is not the global perspective of 3:1–15 a mirage, so that chapter 3 simply unpacks the retribution against Babylon announced by 2:5–20?

In response, we note that there is indeed an important connection between these past interventions and the Babylon problem: God comes to battle his enemies because of their wickedness and guilt, and with a view toward establishing justice. This is explicit both in Habakkuk (3:12) and in contexts dealing with the specific historical judgments that Habakkuk echoes (e.g., Gen 15:16). However, it seems that the historical references made in Habakkuk 3:1–15 are themselves purged of all meaningful specifics, but not because their referents are easily identified.³⁰ Rather, these theophanies are being re-activated, re-visioned, as the comprehensive divine response to human sin and injustice.

The geographical and temporal variety of these past theophanic interventions also argues for their cumulative effect as part of the horizon of chapter 3, while restricting that chapter’s optic to the destruction of historical Babylon would render it both anti-climactic and inadequate. Anticlimactic,

and ‘nations’ in 3:6 is a strong caution against forcing a clear distinction on this point. Most importantly, the hymn shifts seamlessly from local to global language and imagery, and both local and larger-scale elements together constitute the meta-theophany that Habakkuk witnesses. Note Roberts’s remarks, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 140.

28 While it could certainly include delivery of “the land from invaders,” I cannot agree with Sweeney’s summary of the theophany’s significance in such limited terms (“Structure, Genre and Intent,” 78).

29 Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 151.

30 While Habakkuk 3 does not completely abandon nations-language (Cushan, Midian), no nations of importance to Judah in the late sixth century are mentioned.

because Babylon's destruction has already been announced in detail in 2:5–20, and inadequate because the imagery used in 3:12 for the destruction of the 'wicked' draws on widespread ancient Near Eastern imagery used for complete destruction of one's enemies. In the closest parallel, such imagery introduces the denouement of *Enūma Eliš*, with Marduk smashing the dead Tiamat's skull before receiving his kingship; he disembowels her in the same context.³¹ Clearly, once one has smashed the head(s) of one's enemies, the conflict is over and the enemy effectively ceases to exist.³² The theophany of chapter 3 thus cannot be limited to Babylon's destruction, nor can Babylon's destruction be separated from the divine actions which gradually eliminate all wickedness and establish YHWH's uncontested reign.³³

If the optic of Hab 3:1–15 is indeed cosmic and final rather than local and preliminary, the role that the nations play there is clear. They are simply and entirely the enemies of YHWH, who actively oppose him (note their arrows in 3:14). Despite their vigorous opposition (3:14), they are doomed to destruction (3:13).³⁴

The characterization of the nations in the hymn of chapter 3 is also closely tied to several criteria of identity that distinguish between them and YHWH's people and shed light on their new role. First, as implied by their opposition to YHWH in battle (3:14), the nations are not allied with YHWH's anointed (Hab 3:12).³⁵ Second, they are labeled 'wicked' (3:13), a term Habakkuk has used only sparingly to refer to the majority group in Judah (1:4) and to Babylon (1:13).³⁶

31 COS 1.111, near the end of tablet 4 (lines 95–139).

32 A variety of other parallels or similarities, some clear and some less so, are noted in D.T. Tsumura, "Ugaritic Poetry and Habakkuk 3," *TynBul* 40 (1988): 24–48, and in Ahituv, "The Sinai Theophany."

33 Note the uses of אֲרָץ in 2:14 (in the context of Babylon's destruction) and in 3:6, 12 (in the context of cosmic judgment).

34 In further support of this conclusion, the language of nature's upheaval occurs in clearly eschatological contexts in Jdg 5:4; Mic 1:3f.; Nah 1:2f.; Ps 68:8f., as noted by M. Beck, *Der "Tag YHWHs" im Dodekapropheten: Studien im Spannungsfeld von Traditions- und Redaktionsgeschichte* (BZAW 356; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 243.

35 In the larger context of the book this group overlaps significantly with those who do not hold to the vision in faith (2:4). The generic (actually religious-ethical) descriptions given in Habakkuk 3 permit identification and fates to be assigned without reference to nationality.

36 Terms that fall into the same semantic field in Habakkuk include the proud (עֲפֹל, Hab 2:4), who by definition neglects the vision, and the guilty (אָשָׁם, Hab 1:11). While Habakkuk the prophet used אָשָׁם-language to create a relative distinction between Babylon and the nations it has subdued (Hab 1:13), the book simultaneously uses an absolute distinction between 'righteous' and 'wicked.'

While some uncertainty exists as to the exact syntax and grammar of the phrase in 3:13, the presence of רשע is not in question.³⁷ Even in the unlikely case that a specific entity (e.g., Mot) is in view in 3:13, its close association with the ‘nations’ in 3:12 and the ‘head of his villages’ in 3:14 as parallel objects of divine wrath would require that their defining characteristic be held in common. YHWH’s people, conversely, are allied with YHWH’s anointed (3:13) and, far from resisting his deliverance, receive it from him and hold to the vision in faith (2:4).³⁸

On the basis of the above arguments, we can propose that the puzzling dynamism of the nations theme in Habakkuk is best understood as the consequence of the nations being redefined in 3:1–15.³⁹ This redefinition coincides with a shift in perspective from the present to the eschatological future. No longer are the nations a group from which Babylon is distinguished and that Babylon oppresses. Not only does the absence of Babylon from the hymn prohibit us from viewing the other nations as victims in 3:1–15, but the hymn explicitly characterizes them as ‘wicked’ and consequently makes them the target of Yahweh’s wrath.⁴⁰ The supra-national perspective of 3:1–15 is also indicated by the parallelism between ‘world’ (אָרץ) and ‘the nations’ (גוֹיִם) in 3:6, 12 and by the contrast of ‘my people/anointed’ with the ‘wicked/nations,’ which coincides with the final fates of the two groups.

9.3 Analysis

9.3.1 *Lexical Overlap or Distinction between Israel/Judah and the Nations*

A summary of Habakkuk’s discussion of non-Israelites groups must take into account the clear differences between chapters 1–2 and the theophanic hymn.

37 While BHS suggests that the preposition is extraneous, BHQ notes no variants in the Hebrew tradition. Most importantly, the phrase is comprehensible as is, with מִן being partitive: ‘you smashed the head of the house of the wicked.’ Cf. C.H.J. van der Merwe, J.A. Naudé, and J.H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (Biblical Languages: Hebrew 3; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 289.

38 In the larger context of the book this group overlaps significantly with those who are righteous (צַדִּיק) and who hold to the vision in faith (Hab 2:4).

39 This is an example of the transformation of a referent discussed in the present work’s opening chapter (§ 1.2.4). It is based on the different characterizations of the nations in Habakkuk 1–2 and Habakkuk 3 and the clearly separate settings in which those two manifestations of the nations are set.

40 The careful use of רשע and related language bears notice, especially given the book’s interest in the theme of righteousness.

This is true even at the level of vocabulary, since in chapters 1–2 Babylon, Judah, and the nations exists in the same arena (similarly, 3:16). In the hymn of chapter 3, by contrast, Babylon is absent and YHWH comes to deliver ‘his people’ and ‘his anointed’ rather than Judah *tout court*. This mixture of lexical distinction and overlap makes it difficult to further explore the terminology used without undertaking a study of its semantic contours, so we turn to that.

9.3.2 *Partial Semantic Identity of Judah and the Nations*

Perhaps surprisingly in a prophetic book so focused on the details of Babylon’s wickedness, Habakkuk presents partial overlap of the identities of Judah and Babylon in the present by affirming the existence of the ‘wicked’ within Judah’s population, and more generally in Babylon (1:4, 13). No identity or overlap exists between a group related to Judah and a group related to the generic ‘nations’ in the book’s eschatological hymn, however.

Some of Habakkuk’s uses of אֲרָץ create a category which includes *all* nations on the basis of a very general identity (2:14, 20; perhaps 3:3, 6, 12),⁴¹ but where it can be clearly discerned, this identity has little significance for the nations-theme. In 2:14 it refers to an aggregate population not presently filled with knowledge of YHWH, and 2:20 calls a global audience (כָּל־הָאָרֶץ) to be in awe of YHWH (likely anticipating the theophany of chapter 3).⁴² The other uses (3:3, 6, 12) occur either in parallel with geographical or cosmic domains (3:3), or in some sort of parallelism with the nations that is not clearly synonymous or coreferential (3:6, 12). It is notable that the few uses of אֲרָץ that refer to the whole of humanity are set in a future, sometimes clearly eschatological, paradigm, since this reinforces the distinction between the historical, relatively local focus of most of chapters 1–2 and the global perspective of the theophanic hymn.

9.3.3 *Semantic Distinction between Judah and the Nations*

At least two types of distinction between Judah and non-Israelite groups appear in Habakkuk. First, in the book’s present, only some in Judah are wicked, since they are distinct from the righteous whom they oppress. Conversely, generically wicked Babylon is not separated into multiple subgroups on the basis of religious or moral criteria.

Second, in the eschatological future presented in the hymn of 3:1–15, YHWH’s people, analogous to the non-wicked in Judah in chapters 1–2, are sharply contrasted with the nations, Babylon having left the scene as a distinct historical

41 The uses of אֲרָץ do not function inclusively; see Hab 1:14; 2:8, 17.

42 Beck, *Tag YHWHs*, 101, notes the similarity between Hab 2:20 and Zeph 1:7; Zech 2:13.

entity. It should be emphasized that the relationship between this fraction of Judah and YHWH's people in Habakkuk is analogous and not one of exact identity. Exact identification of the two could only be affirmed if Habakkuk presented the transformation of all 'wicked' Judahites into righteous persons, or if the book had postulated their complete removal from empirical Judah. Since neither of these is affirmed, the relationship between historical-empirical Judah and YHWH's people in the eschatological future must remain one of only partial overlap.⁴³

9.4 Conclusions

The presentation of the nations in Habakkuk 1–2 is much like that in Nahum, with all nations except the oppressive empire (here Babylon; in Nahum, Assyria) being identified as its victims. Unlike Nahum, however, Habakkuk does not present Judah as an implicitly innocent victim, since Judah's population in the present explicitly includes some who are wicked.⁴⁴ Against that backdrop, Babylon will serve as the means by which YHWH will punish Judah in the near future, and its own guilt means that Babylon will be punished in turn.

As noted above, these differences in characterization, role, and fate correspond to different temporal settings, with chapters 1–2 being largely limited to the present and near future while the theophanic hymn focuses on the eschatological future (even if some of its imagery is based in Israel's distant past). The shift to an eschatological paradigm in which the problematic relation of sin, punishment, and divine justice that runs throughout the book is fully resolved appears together with a redefinition of the nations. There is clearly some discontinuity here, since nothing is said of the interim between the initial stage (the nations as victims, Babylon as the only wicked non-Israelite entity) and the final stage (all nations are wicked, Babylon is unmentioned).⁴⁵ One can trace a fairly direct line from Babylon in the present or near future to the nations in the eschatological denouement since both are qualified as

43 Note also Hab 2:4, where YHWH makes (in a Judahite context) a distinction between those who accept the vision and those who don't.

44 The absence of an explicitly sinful Judahite population in Nahum is surely related to Nahum's announcement of the end of Judah's judgment (Nah 1:3; 2:1).

45 J.D.W. Watts, "Psalmody in Prophecy: Habakkuk 3 in Context," in *Forming Prophetic Literature* (ed. J.D.W. Watts and P.R. House; JSOTSup 235; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 209–23, argues for the integral relation of Habakkuk 3 to the rest of the book.

‘wicked,’ but what of the nations other than Babylon? Why does Habakkuk not carry that element through more clearly?

Part of the answer may lie in the fact that in the same context that announces definitive judgment on the wicked nations, YHWH brings final deliverance to a group negatively defined as those who are not ‘wicked’ and positively defined as ‘his people’ but devoid of any explicit national identity. While this is only an implicit or potential way to connect the nations-as-not-wicked with the book’s ultimate horizon, other voices in the Twelve clearly show that such inclusivism or nuanced universalism is possible in the HB’s prophetic literature. This does not completely explain why Habakkuk ends as it does, but it highlights both continuity and discontinuity between the book’s treatment of the nations and those found elsewhere in the Twelve, including the immediately adjacent books of Nahum and Zephaniah.⁴⁶

46 Note P. House’s discussion of the differences that distinguish Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah while allowing them to share a common plot that presents “how God’s judgment will remove the wicked from the scene, leave the faithful to their well-earned reward, and thereby vindicate Yahweh and the prophets’ denunciations and predictions of future glory.” “Dramatic Coherence in Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah,” in *Forming Prophetic Literature* (ed. J.D.W. Watts and P.R. House; JSOTSup 235; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 195–208 (205). See also the complementary observations of W. Dietrich, “Three Minor Prophets and the Major Empires: Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives on Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah,” in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve. Methodological Foundations—Redactional Processes—Historical Insights* (ed. R. Albertz, J. Nogalski, and J. Wöhrle; BZAW 433; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 147–56.

The Nations in Zephaniah

The book of Zephaniah may present the fates of Israel/Judah and the nations as more closely interrelated than any other book in the Twelve, since the nations (or part of them) appear in connection with both Judah and its remnant in past, present, and future settings. When to this is added the fact that the nations and Judah alike are associated with both judgment and deliverance, and that at least one passage (Zeph 3:9) describes a religious transformation of non-Israelites that is almost without parallel within the collection of the Twelve, it becomes clear that the nations theme is inseparable from the most central themes of the book.

10.1 Terminology

10.1.1 *Proper Nouns*

In Zephaniah, specific terms referring to nations and ethnic groups are clustered in the oracles against the nations (2:4–15), with the possible exception of ‘people of Canaan’ (which may be better translated as ‘merchants,’ 1:11).¹ The following are attested: Gaza (2:4); Ashkelon (2:4, 7); Ashdod (2:4); Ekron (2:4); nation of the Cherethites (2:5); Canaan, land of the Philistines (2:5); Moab (2:8, 9); Ammon (2:8, 9); Sodom (2:9), in a comparison with Moab; Gomorrah (2:9) in a comparison with Ammon; Ethiopians (2:12; Ethiopia is only locative in 3:10); Assyria (2:13); and Nineveh (2:13, termed ‘the exultant city’ in 2:15). This list is notable for including nations far and near, ranging as far as Cush to the southwest and Assyria to the northeast.

10.1.2 *עַם-Language, גוֹי-Language, and Related Terms*

Language for people groups is relatively abundant in Zephaniah. The plural גוֹיִם is used several times for the class of non-Israelite nations, with the term in construct with ‘coastlands’ in 2:11 (כָּל אֵיִם הַגּוֹיִם). In the one case in which ‘kingdoms’ (מַמְלָכוֹת) is used it is at least partially co-referential, and in parallel, with גוֹיִם (3:8). The only use of the singular גוֹי for a nation other than

¹ As noted by J.J.M. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah: A Commentary* (OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 175, ‘merchants’ better suits the parallelism, although several ancient versions translated the term with ‘Canaan.’

Israel is unambiguous since it is in construct with a proper noun: ‘nation of the Cherethites’ (גוי כרתים, 2:5).

Much like גוים, the plural עמים (anarthrous) is also used for (some of) the non-Israelite nations in 3:9, and occurs in the comprehensive כל עמי הארץ in 3:20. Notably, the singular forms גוי and עם, with and without pronominal suffixes that link them to YHWH, and sometimes in construct with remnant language (שארית, יתר), are used for Judah at various points in Zephaniah (1:11; 2:1, 8, 9, 10). Thus while Judah is not part of the ‘nations,’ little light is shed on the nations-theme by vocabulary in the semantic field of people/nation.

10.1.3 *Other Language*

The language that Zephaniah uses to refer to different regions, and occasionally to the whole world, is not as varied as the wide range of people groups to which the book refers with proper nouns. The regions named are generally in close proximity to Judah and of relatively modest extent: the Levantine ‘coast’ (2:7), inhabited by the Cherethites (2:5), and the ‘north’ (2:13), which is in parallel with, and likely refers to, Assyria, mentioned in the same verse.

A few expressions reflect the global perspective that predominates in most of the book. This is particularly clear in the opening verses, which are indebted at a number of points to biblical descriptions of the flood. When drawn upon in the seventh century, these statements effectively circumvent and perhaps undo smaller classifications, including national ones.² The phrase ‘from on the face of the ground’ found in 1:2 is shared with Gen 6:7; 7:4; 8:8, but occurs only rarely elsewhere (Exod 32:12; Deut 6:15; 1 Kgs 9:7; 13:34; Amos 9:8; Jer 28:16). The subsequent allusions to the same primordial context argue strongly for seeing this as the first of several references to a global judgment. In 1:3, the order of created animate life (humanity, animals, birds, fish) is a precise reversal of the same elements in Genesis 1. Similarly, the dissolution of sinful humanity as their flesh is poured out ‘like dust’ (1:17) reverses the formation of Adam from the dust (Gen 2:7). Finally, the term אדמה in the phrase ‘from the face of the ground’ in 1:2, 3 also forms an inclusion with ארץ in 1:18 (*bis*), which is accordingly best translated as ‘earth.’³

In 1:8 it is noted almost in passing that some in Jerusalem (probably members of the court) dress in foreign (נכרי) clothing, an interesting case of one

2 Pace M. De Roche, “Zephaniah 1,2–3: The ‘Sweeping’ of Creation,” *VT* 30 (1980): 104–109 (107–08), there is no reason to restrict the scope of 1:2–3 to Israel, and there is thus no reason to deny the authenticity of 1:3b.

3 This sense is quite common in Zephaniah. The noun ארץ is often used absolutely for ‘earth’ as the extent of God’s actions, 2:11 (parallel with ‘all the coastlands’), 3:8, 19, 20 (with ‘all’).

group literally looking like the other. Much later in the book it is said that ‘All the coastlands of all the nations’ (כל אִיִּים הַגּוֹיִם, 2:11) will bow down before YHWH at some future time, and both the judgment and renewal of Judah will affect ‘the whole earth’ (כל־הָאָרֶץ, 3:8, 19). Finally, once Judah has been restored, an unidentified nation or group of nations, or parts of the same, still exists in the capacity of renewed Judah’s ‘enemies’ (אִיְבָדִים, 3:15) and ‘oppressors’ (כָּל־מַעֲנִידִים, 3:19), but will be definitively dealt with by YHWH.

10.2 Characteristics

10.2.1 *The Nations Will Be Judged by YHWH*

Zephaniah’s treatment of the nations will be approached using the four sections that correspond to the book’s literary and sense units (1:2–2:3; 2:4–15; 3:1–7; 3:8–20).⁴ As was just noted, the nations are included in the opening description of universal judgment from which nothing is protected (1:1–3, perhaps 1:14–18). In the oracles of Zephaniah 2, specific nations most often come under condemnation for their pride and for their violence or aggression against Judah. A short passage in Zephaniah 3 constitutes the final mention of the nations’ punishment.

10.2.1.1 An Overture of Universal Judgment (1:1–3, 14–18)

The first oracle (1:2–3) is striking for its universal scope and the absence of any mention of individual groups, whether Judah or the nations. Both groups are subsumed under a common identity as the object of divine wrath, which is to be poured out across the globe. Whatever one is to make of the troublesome pair אֶסְף־אֶסְף in 1:2, its emphasis on wiping the earth clean of all life is unmistakable.⁵ The destruction described in 1:3 exceeds even that of the flood, since it brings aquatic life to an end. Like the flood, this judgment is also motivated

4 These sections are essentially the same across much of the literature, though minor differences appear concerning 2:4; 3:8; and a few other passages; A. Berlin, *Zephaniah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 25A; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 17–20, succinctly summarizes the relevant textual data. See also D. Timmer, “The Non-Israelite Nations in Zephaniah: Conceptual Coherence and the Relationship of the Parts to the Whole,” in *The New Form Criticism and the Book of the Twelve* (ed. M. Boda, M. Floyd, and C. Toffelmire; SBL Ancient Near Eastern Monographs, forthcoming), on which this chapter occasionally draws with permission.

5 *K-B* emends the text to do away with all Hifil forms of סֹף, being here and Jer 8:13; see the longer discussion in M. Sweeney, *Zephaniah: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 59–62.

by and focused on sin. While it is omitted by the (corrected) LXX, the specification that the anticipated destruction will affect ‘the ruins along with the wicked’ keeps the moral component in the foreground (cf. also 1:17 and the litany of sins in 1:4–6, 8–9, 12).⁶

The closing line of this first section creates an *inclusio* with 1:2a by repeating ‘from the face of the ground,’ and reinforces this catastrophe’s focus on the human race (1:18). This universal perspective is also evident in the use in 1:17 of the generic אדם for humanity (also seen in 1:3) in order to anticipate its undoing: human bodies disintegrate like the dust (עפר) from which they are formed in Gen 2:7, once again because of sin (כי ליהוה חטאו). Zephaniah 1 thus provides the reader with a global framework for both the judgment focused on Judah and Jerusalem and that coming upon the nations in chapter 2. Most importantly, it emphasizes that divine judgment is directed primarily along moral lines, while one’s belonging to a particular ethnic group or nation-state is incidental.

10.2.1.2 Oracles against the Nations (2:4–15)

While Judah is criticized for her idolatry, social injustice, and infidelity to YHWH, the nations around her are condemned for their antipathy and pride against ‘YHWH’s people’ (2:8, 10, regarding Moab and Ammon) and their proud self-assurance (2:15, of Nineveh).⁷ The first category of accusation raises the issue of Judah’s unique identity among the nations, while the second views the nations directly in relation to Judah’s God.

10.2.1.3 Judah and Its Future Remnant in 2:4–15

Because the nations here are often described in relation to Judah and its remnant, it is necessary to explore that concept in parallel. Within the oracles concerning the nations (2:4–15), the use of remnant-language creates a binary characterization of Judah. The remnant concept in 2:4–15 governs the meaning of ‘people’ at various points (יתר and שארית appear in construct with ‘house of Judah’ or ‘my people’), and in these cases a future setting is explicit by virtue of

6 On the phrase והמכשלות את־הרשעים in 1:2, see A. Gelston, *The Twelve Minor Prophets* (BHQ 13; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2010), *126, and D. Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle de l’Ancien Testament* (4 vols.;OBO 50/1–4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982–2005), 3:882.

7 The suggestion that the ‘covenant of brotherhood’ that Israel under David made with several surrounding nations lies behind oracles against the nations (as suggested by D. Christiansen) fails to take into account the theological evaluation of the nations’ behavior as proud, self-deifying, etc. Cf. D. Christiansen, “Nations,” *ABD* 4:1037–49.

either temporal indicators (וְהָיָה, 2:7) or imperfective forms (תְּהִיָּה, 2:9). In such cases a ‘remnant of the house of Judah’ (2:7) and ‘the remnant of my people’ or ‘the remainder of my nation’ (2:9) will benefit from the coming judgment of the nations. On the other hand, ‘my people’ by itself (e.g., 2:8, 10) refers to the historical Judah that Moab and Ammon have reproached in the past, and is set not in the future but in the present or past by virtue of the associated perfective verbal forms.⁸

10.2.1.4 The Nations in 2:4–15

Most of Zephaniah 2 consists of oracles of varied form that address nations to Israel’s west, east, south, and north. The mention of one nation in each of the cardinal directions establishes a global perspective similar to that with which the book began. This selectivity probably refers *pars pro toto* to all the nations as guilty of past misdeeds, and on that account facing future punishment (with the exception of 2:11).⁹

The first oracle is directed against the Philistines, and announces that the Mediterranean coast will be emptied of its inhabitants (2:5d) and will become pastureland. The oracle’s last line, ‘for YHWH their God will intervene for them, and return their captivity/restore their fortunes,’ is difficult. The reading שְׁבוּתָם is textually uncertain (Qere שְׁבִיתָם), and both phrases are generic rather than precise.¹⁰ The mention of Canaan in 2:5, which presents what was Philistine territory (even in this oracle) in terms reminiscent of the territory that Israel was to possess long ago, may add connotations of Israel’s initial settlement in Canaan to this situation described here.¹¹

8 On the clear identity of the remnant and its distinction from Judah, see S. Kapelrud, *The Message of the Prophet Zephaniah: Mythology and Ideas* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1975), 77. H.-D. Neef, “Vom Gottesgericht zum universalen Heil: Komposition und Redaktion des Zefanjabuches,” *ZAW* 111 (1999): 530–46, gives no reason for denying to Zephaniah the ability to conceive of both sinful Judah (in one context) and its transformed remnant (in another), and relegates all remnant-concepts to the exilic and post-exilic periods (544).

9 The four nations in 2:5–13 are comparable to ‘the nations,’ i.e., a non-exhaustive reference to non-Israelites that allows for the existence of other non-Israelites who either are not guilty of the same crimes or who will not suffer the same punishment.

10 The versions attest both senses (captivity, fortunes); cf. Gelston, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, *127–28, and Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 131–32.

11 A. Berlin, “Zephaniah’s Oracles against the Nations and an Israelite Cultural Myth,” in *Fortunate the Eyes That See* (ed. A.B. Beck et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 175–84 178. The Book of Joshua does not list the seacoast among the territories conquered; cf. R.S. Hess, *Joshua* (TOTC; Nottingham and Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity and IVP Academic, 1996), 241–42.

The oracle in 2:8–10 is against Moab and Ammon. It first alleges that these nations have taunted, despised, and boasted against YHWH's people and their territory (2:8).¹² The destruction that will punish these offenses is presented in more comprehensive terms than that in 2:5–7, and is also guaranteed by a divine oath (2:9a). Moabite and Ammonite territories will become like Sodom and Gomorrah, “possessed only by nettles and salt pits” and permanently desolate. Exceptionally, this oracle sees Judah's remnant take an active role in the plundering and repossession of Moab and Ammon. The oracle ends in 2:10 with the echo of two terms used to describe the offences of Moab and Ammon at the beginning of the oracle (חרף, Piel; גרל, Hifil, 2:8).¹³

After describing a very significant change among some of the nations in 2:11 (to be examined below), the text returns to the topic of judgment in a third passage focused on Cush (2:12). Its apparently retrospective orientation suggests that this short pericope should not be seen as an oracle against Cush. First, the verse lacks any verbal-syntactic connection to its immediate context, and is therefore without a clear grammatical tense.¹⁴ Second, since there is little historical evidence for destruction of Cushites later than the seventh century, the fall of Thebes as the center of Cushite power in 664/663 is the most likely referent of this statement.¹⁵ It is therefore preferable to understand 2:12 as affirming that YHWH has already begun his campaign against the nations.

The destruction of the Cushites as a *fait accompli* is particularly effective as a preface to the final oracle, focused on Assyria. The description of Assyria's

12 Moab's cooperation with Assyria as one of her vassals may lie behind the arrogance and scorn mentioned here; cf. Moab's presence among those who paid tribute to Sennacherib per his account of the siege of Jerusalem, “Sennacherib's Siege of Jerusalem,” translated by M. Cogan (*COS* 2.119B:302–303). Ammon's standing around this time is hinted at by the fact that it submitted large vassal payments to Assurbanipal.

13 The unspecified pronominal referent (‘them’) in the first clause of 2:11 makes it difficult to determine the precise relationship between 2:10 and 2:11.

14 The connections that do exist, גל in 2:12 and ו on a perfective form in 2:13, establish that 2:12 is connected to its context, but the nature of these connections is not dependent on verbal (and thus chronological or aspectual) continuity.

15 N. Grimal, *A History of Ancient Egypt* (trans. I. Shaw; Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 352; Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 202; M.H. Floyd, *Minor Prophets, Part 2* (FOTL 22; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 212–13; M. Van De Mieroop, *A History of Ancient Egypt* (Blackwell History of the Ancient World; Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 293. This obviates the need for the arguments of R.W. Anderson Jr. in favor of a Cushite presence in Syria-Palestine: “Zephaniah ben Cushi and Cush of Benjamin: Traces of Cushite Presence in Syria-Palestine,” in *The Pitcher is Broken* (ed. S.W. Holloway and L.K. Handy; JSOTSup 190; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 45–70.

destruction resembles that of the Philistine coast in 2:5–7, although some aspects are amplified. The reasons given for Assyria's fate are likewise comparable to those that explain the judgments against Moab and Ammon. Assyria's self-image is emphasized by the citation of her direct speech, and the explicit mention of her incomparability (2:15) corresponds well with the empire's self-description.¹⁶

10.2.1.5 The Nations and Judah in 3:6–8

This passage clearly contributes to the developing perspective of 3:1–13.¹⁷ Compared to the passages considered above, it has several notable features. First, it asserts that YHWH's actions against the nations in the past were intended to promote Judah's repentance (3:6–7; 2:12 is the only precedent). Second, unlike the oracles against the nations in chapter 2, it contains no proper nouns and instead focuses on the nations as a generic category (גוים [bis], ממלכות) and the earth as a whole (כל-הארץ). Last, unlike the book's opening passage, 3:6–8 does not explicitly include Judah in the judgment announced.¹⁸

The excision of the nations from the passage by emending 'the nations' (attested by M, V, S, and T) to 'their nation' is arbitrary.¹⁹ In addition to the unanimity of the primary textual witness, the logic of 3:6 is clear in itself, and is also mirrored in 2:12, which is part of the longer argument tied to the call to repent in 2:1–3, just as 3:6 anticipates 3:8–13.²⁰ The shift from third-person discourse in 3:6 to second-person discourse in 3:7a demonstrates to Judah the

16 See M. Nissinen, "A Report of Prophecies: Mullissu-kabtat to Assurbanipal," in *Prophecies and Prophecy in the Ancient Near East* (ed. M. Nissinen, P. Machinist; SBLWAW 12; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003), 126–28 (127); G.H. Johnston, "Nahum's Rhetorical Allusions to the Neo-Assyrian Lion Motif," *BSac* 158 (2001): 287–307; F.M. Fales, *Guerre et paix en Assyrie: Religion et impérialisme* (Les Conférences de l'École Pratique des Hautes Études; Paris: Cerf, 2010), 69–94; and S. Holloway, *Aššur is King! Aššur is King! Religion in the Exercise of Power in the Neo-Assyrian Empire* (CHANE 10; Leiden: Brill, 2002).

17 Roberts notes that the woe against Jerusalem is clearly limited to 3:1–5, while the first-person divine speech that begins in 3:6 continues until at least 3:12. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 210–11.

18 H. Irsigler helpfully explores the interrelation of Judah and the nations in 3:1–13, *Zefanja* (HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2002), 343–48.

19 The excision is suggested by Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 208–09.

20 Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 203; D.H. Ryou, *Zephaniah's Oracles against the Nations: A Synchronic and Diachronic Study of Zephaniah 2:1–3:8* (BIS 13; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 284–85.

relevance of YHWH's actions against the nations.²¹ What she has failed to learn from the judgment of others she must now learn by experience.

Those who will learn, and who later in the passage are termed the remnant, are most likely those addressed by the imperative חֲכִי־לִי.²² The events for which this audience is to wait are the pouring out of YHWH's anger on the nations and kingdoms he will assemble, and the application of his jealousy to the whole world. In terms of the nations theme, there is no need to see 'nations,' 'kingdoms,' and 'all the earth' as entirely synonymous.²³ But while the clear distinction between the nations/kingdoms on the one hand and Israel/Judah on the other is maintained across the book, so that Judah here is almost certainly not referred to with nations-terminology, the phrase 'all the earth' makes clear that not only the nations, but Judah as well, will undergo judgment for having dishonored YHWH (cf. 3:1–5, 7b).

10.2.2 *Some of the Nations Will Be Transformed and Serve YHWH*

Despite a robust presentation of divine judgment against Judah and very strong statements predicting the end of a number of the neighboring nations, Zephaniah's treatment of the nations also possesses a positive aspect.

10.2.2.1 The Nations Worship YHWH (2:11)

In the middle of the binary treatment of Judah and the nations *qua* her enemies in the oracles of Zephaniah 2, the author suddenly introduces a transformation of some non-Israelite individuals as a result of which they worship YHWH (2:11).²⁴ This "heilsgeschichtliche Perspektive" and the prose-like form of the text have prompted many to ascribe this section to a redactor.²⁵ This, however, is not the only possible significance of these features, and the larger question (even if there is surface-level incohesion) is whether this verse coheres

21 Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 175, plausibly suggests that "the rise of Saite Egypt and the Neo-Babylonian Empire in the mid- to late seventh century appears to underlie this statement."

22 See Sweeney's careful argument for this, *Zephaniah*, 179–80.

23 Additionally, the 2mp pronominal reference in 3:8 continues the deixis of 3:7, where God spoke to unrepentant Judah; and this same deixis is continued in 3:11–13, when he addresses 'the remnant of Israel' after speaking in the third person about the nations.

24 "In the final decades before the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians, the religion in Judah can be characterized as Yahwistic . . . [meaning] monotheistic, aniconic and oriented on one central sanctuary." B. Becking, "Introductory Remarks," in *The Crisis of Israelite Religion* (ed. B. Becking and M.C.A. Korpel; *OtSt* 42; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 1–8 (5).

25 E.g., Neef, "Vom Gottesgericht," 542. Kapelrud, *Zephaniah*, 34, considers 2:10–11 late because of its "prose form" and sermonic tone.

semantically with the rest of the book.²⁶ From that perspective, 2:11 can be seen as part of the book's developing paradigm that gradually recasts the relationship between Judah and the nations. An emphasis on religious identity apart from nationality was already noted at the beginning of Zephaniah 1, and is further developed by the depiction here in 2:11a,b of a contest between two opposing claimants to deity. 'All the gods of the earth' are opposed to YHWH, who in an awe-inspiring way will reduce them to nothing.²⁷

YHWH's demonstration of his uniqueness incites people everywhere to worship him.²⁸ While M. Sweeney argues that 'all the gods of the earth' are the subject of the verb וישתחוּ in 2:11 and consequently speaks of those gods' 'submission' to the God of Israel, it seems more likely that non-Israelites are in view. At issue is the relation of the verse's final clause, 'all the coastlands of the nations,' to the verb 'worship/bow down.' We note, first, that the only other occurrence in the HB of the phrase 'all the coastlands of the nations' (Gen 10:5) refers to human beings rather than to deities. The syntagm in Genesis 10 is especially significant because its referent includes all humanity, since after the flood "all the coastlands of the nations were separated into their lands, each one according to his language." Second, the term 'coastlands' (אֲרָצוֹת) consistently refers to places (coastlands, Isa 11:11; perhaps Ps 97:11) or people (Est 1:10; Ps 72:10; Isa 20:6; note the parallel use of אֲרָצוֹת and גוֹיִם in Isa 40:15)²⁹ and never to deities.³⁰ To understand this phrase as a reference to various deities would thus be without precedent.

26 It is also plausible to view 2:10–11 as foreshadowing the plot's denouement, as P. House suggests, *A Prophetic Drama* (JSOT Bible and Literature 16; JSOTSup 69; Sheffield: Almond, 1988), 67. Neef, "Vom Gottesgericht," considers it inevitable that any future perspective (e.g., 2:7, 9 along with 2:10–11) using converted perfective verbs or imperfective forms (as do those verses) would be judged salvation-historical, but it is not certain that such thinking must be restricted to the post-exilic period.

27 The most recent 3mp subject was Moab and the Ammonites (2:9), to whom לָהֶם in 3:10 refers; however, the parallel phrase הוּא עַל-כָּל-אֱלֹהִים, noted by E. Ben Zvi, *A Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Zephaniah* (BZAW 198; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991), 172–73, in Ps 96:4 // 1 Chron 16:25, favors taking the first two clauses of 2:11 as describing Yahweh's supremacy over his opponents.

28 Not only is there no evidence of compulsion in the nations' response in 3:9–10 (quite the contrary), but there is always an element of acquiescence in the Hishtaphel of חוּה; cf. especially H.-P. Stähli, "חוּה," *TLOT* 1:398–401.

29 Jer 31:10 has גוֹיִם (as a human audience) in parallel with מִמְרַחֵק.

30 Little changes if the gods are in fact in view, since those who worshipped them would see them vanquished by YHWH and would presumably recognize his unique status.

The group that Zephaniah 2:11 sees emerging from the larger whole of the 'nations/peoples' thus witnesses YHWH's demonstration of his unique superiority and becomes his worshippers for that reason. Oeming's classification of this text among those which present the "integration of the nations in Yahweh's wonderful new creation which surmounts national limits and makes one new people of God from Jew and Gentile" draws attention to a trajectory to which we will return in the context of 3:18–20.³¹ For the moment, we observe only that the juxtaposition of salvation for some nations and judgment or destruction for others creates significant complexity in the nations-theme. At least here, however, the characterization of the nations as those who worship YHWH provides ample grounds upon which to base a corresponding distinction in terms of the fates of the two groups.

10.2.2.2 The Nations Call Upon and Serve YHWH (3:9)

The opening words of the book's final section (3:8) lead the reader to expect definitive judgment against the nations, but the text goes on to describe the very opposite, focusing in 3:9 on a diverse body of non-Israelites called 'peoples.'³² Until this point in the book עַם (sg.) has been used mainly of Israel (with a contextual qualifier; exceptions include 'people of Canaan,' 1:11), and this is the first appearance of the plural.³³

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- 31 M. Oeming, "Gericht Gottes und Geschichte der Völker nach Zef 3,1–13: Exegitische und systematische Erwägungen zur Frage: In welchem Sinne ist der kanonische Endtext normativ," *ThQ* 167 (1987): 289–300 (295). He identifies Gen 28:3; 35:11; 48:4; Isa 55:5; 66:17–24; Zeph 2:11; Zech 2:15; Mal 1:11 as having a similar significance.
 - 32 Oeming, "Gericht Gottes," notes that 3:9–20 have been judged incoherent for theological, literary-critical, and text-critical reasons (292–93). While O.H. Steck, "Zu Zef 3,9–10," *BZ* 34 (1990): 90–95, calls the contrast contradictory, the possibility of judgment leading to deliverance needs to be seriously reckoned with; cf. J. Wagenaar, *Judgement & Salvation: The Composition & Redaction of Micah 2–5* (VTSup 85; Leiden: Brill, 2001).
 - 33 The emendation of 'peoples' (עַמִּים) to 'my people' (עַמִּי) proposed by J. Vlaardingerbroek, *Zephaniah* (HCOT; Leuven: Peeters, 1999), 195, and others (W.L. Holladay, "Reading Zephaniah with a Concordance: Suggestions for a Redaction History," *JBL* 120 [2001]: 671–84; Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 210, 216–17) has no textual support and must surmise that the MT's reading can be explained by a later scribe's belief that Judah's judgment was a global judgment. It is therefore arbitrary and should be rejected, since the earliest attestations of the Hebrew text preserve the plural (cf. Gelston, *Twelve Prophets*; Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 184; Ben Zvi, *Zephaniah*, 224–25), as does LXX. Further, against suggestions that the article's absence indicates textual difficulties, H. Irisgler points out that the corresponding term 'nations' in 3:6, 8 is also anarthrous and that a plural referent in 3:9a is presupposed by 'they all' in 3:9b (*Zefanja*, 369).

In 3:9, non-Israelites first are made the object of a verb expressing YHWH's transforming activity, then the subject of two verbs expressing the results of YHWH's action.³⁴ The single divine action, 'giving a pure lip,' is rare but has far-reaching effects. The syntagm 'pure lip' is very rare, occurring elsewhere only in Job 33:3 (cf. also Ps 15:3; 24:4; Prov 10:8, 11, 32; Isa 33:15), although parallel concepts are occasionally attested. Most relevant among these related expressions are Hos 2:17, where Baal's name is to be removed from unfaithful Israel's mouth (something quite appropriate in light of Zeph 1:4–6), and Isa 6:5–7, where Isaiah's "iniquity is taken away" and his "sin is forgiven" when a coal from the altar touches his lips.³⁵ All three passages share an emphasis on purification, and in all three it is a prerequisite for a new stage of service of YHWH.³⁶ Since a good case can be made that בֶּרֶר is primarily moral or ethical when paired with heart or hands, Irsigler is right to conclude that it "versteht sich im Sinne einer umfassenden sittlich-religiösen Läuterung."³⁷

The results of YHWH's purification of these 'peoples' are described as 'calling on YHWH's name' and 'serving him side-by-side.' The phrase 'call on YHWH's name' (with various prepositions) "renders numerous modes of communication with YHWH," and in light of 2:11 the phrase seems to refer to a new relationship with YHWH without restricting its expression to a particular

34 Holladay, "Reading," 682.

35 Although טָהַר is used in Isa 6:5, the metaphorical sense is likely in view, and may be rooted in an awareness of the 'opening of the mouth' ritual, which was intended to cleanse the image of all human appurtenances; cf. Irsigler, *Zefanja*, 374. Ben Zvi's protest (*Zephaniah*, 224–25) that the singular 'lip' in Zeph 3:9 cannot be equivalent to the plural 'lips' elsewhere seems unnecessary; note Ps 22:8; Isa 28:11 (in construct with a plural adjective); the Qere in Prov 16:27 (noted in Ben Zvi, *Zephaniah*, 225), where one lip as part of the mouth is comprehensible. In Gen 11:1; Job 12:20; Isa 33:19 (in construct with a plural adjective); Ezek 3:5, 6 (in construct with a plural adjective), it is metonymy for speech. He is correct to insist, however, that there is no reason to limit the image's meaning to cultic purity.

36 Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 184, seems to claim too little when he states that the expression refers to "a pure or special speech necessary so that the nations may all speak a common language," and Irsigler's argument against a simple linguistic understanding of the 'speech' in 3:9 is helpful (*Zefanja*, 376).

37 Irsigler, *Zefanja*, 374. The same cannot be said for the cultic purification of the king in the Ugaritic prayer for a city under siege, but it is not the king's lip which is in view there; cf. D. Pardee, "Ugaritic Prayer for a City under Siege (RS 24.266)," *COS* 1.88:283–85. Hammurabi speaks of Shamash as "ordering with his pure mouth that cannot be altered," in F. van Koppen, "Babylon," in *The Ancient Near East: Historical Sources in Translation* (ed. M. Chavalas; Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 104.

sphere.³⁸ This conclusion is corroborated by the expression ‘serve YHWH,’ which is also frequently contrasted with serving other gods in a variety of settings.³⁹

Before moving on we need to determine whether non-Israelite groups are still in view in 3:10. Does ‘the daughter of my dispersed ones’ refer to exiled Judahites/Israelites or not?⁴⁰ Several considerations suggest that this verse may have non-Israelites in view.⁴¹ First, the shift in deixis between 3:8, 11–12 (second-person) and 3:9–10 (third-person) consistently distinguishes between the Judahite audience (addressed in the second person) and the non-Israelite nations (spoken of in the third person).⁴² Second, we have only minimal evidence for the presence of Israelites in Cush (cf. Isa 11:11, which seems to use Cush and other points on the map to indicate the farthest reaches of the globe, some of which received Israelite refugees or captives).⁴³ Also noteworthy are

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- 38 L. Jonker, “קרא,” *NIDOTTE* 3:971–74 (972). In light of Zephaniah’s penchant for moving backward through Genesis, Gen 4:26 is an interesting cotext; cf. J. Nogalski, “Zephaniah’s Use of Genesis 1–11,” *HBAI* 2 (2013): 373–95.
- 39 E. Carpenter, “עבד,” *NIDOTTE* 3:304–309 (306). Irsigler points out that this is particularly clear in Deuteronomy, e.g., Deut 6:13; 7:4; 10:12 (*Zefanja*, 375). The similar expression in Gen 48:22 is modified by ‘over your brothers’ and so is not semantically equivalent.
- 40 House, for example, sees 3:10 as referring to the ‘remnant’ (*Zephaniah*, 67).
- 41 Steck argues the same point in light of intertextual connections between the passage and Isaiah 18–19, “Zu Zef,” esp. 90–91. M. Schwantes explores 3:9–10 as referring to the same group in “Jhwh hat Schutz gewährt: Theologische Anmerkungen zum Buch des Propheten Zefanja,” in *Der Tag wird kommen: Ein interkontextuelles Gespräch über das Buch des Propheten Zefanja* (ed. W. Dietrich and M. Schwantes; SBS 170; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1996), 134–53, esp. 152–53.
- 42 The only exception to this schema is the use of the third person to refer to Judah’s remnant in 3:12–13, but that is understandable as a distinction between the present audience and the future remnant that will be to some degree discontinuous with it due to YHWH’s removal of the proud (3:11).
- 43 See J.D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33* (WBC 24; Waco: Word, 1985), 179, and the discussion of these pericopes in R.S. Sadler Jr., *Can A Cushite Change His Skin?: An Examination of Race, Ethnicity, and Othering in the Hebrew Bible* (LHBOTS 425; London: T & T Clark, 2005), 46–49, 73–78. Roberts, *Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah*, 218, resolves the difficulty by dating this section after 600–580, and thus after the relocation of many Judahites to Egypt, though even then it is not clear that they went as far south as Cush. Roberts’s claim that “the tendency in later readings of the text is toward highlighting the role of the nations and increasing the universalism” needs to take into account the fact that this is hardly true of all post-exilic Judahite literature; see B. Becking, “Continuity and Community: The Belief System of the Book of Ezra,” in *The Crisis of Israelite Tradition: Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic & Post-Exilic Times* (ed. B. Becking and M.C.A. Korpel; *OtSt* 42; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 256–75 (esp. 270–75), and H.G.M. Williamson, “The Belief System

the continuity provided by the actions of worship and submission in 3:9–10; the parallel example of the Egyptians bring a מְנַחָה in Isa 19:21;⁴⁴ and the corresponding transformation of a portion of Judah in 3:11–13. Finally, several allusions to Genesis 10–11 in Zeph 3:9–10 provide some grounds for פּוֹצֵי seeing as referring to non-Israelites, since פּוֹצֵי is relatively concentrated in the Genesis context (cf. Gen 10:18; 11:4, 8, 9) and since Genesis 10–11 and Zeph 3:9–10 both share a focus on all of humanity and view language as expressing internal dispositions and values.⁴⁵

Among the objections that have been raised against this understanding of בַּת-פּוֹצֵי, most significant are the possibility that some Judahites fled to Cush following Esarhaddon's alliance with the Saïtes, and the statement in Ashurbanipal's annals that Manasseh sent Judean soldiers to Cush to participate in the Assyrian campaign against Tirhakah.⁴⁶ Further, as was noted earlier, a few biblical texts may presume the presence of Israelites/Judahites in Cush (e.g., Isa 11:11).⁴⁷

Even if the evidence weighs in favor of an Israelite referent in 3:10, there are sufficient grounds to demur before M. Beck's assertion that Zeph 3:1–13 suffers from incoherence due to the presence of 3:9–10. The transformation of the non-Israelites in 3:9 allows us to conclude instead that when YHWH pours out his wrath on 'all the earth' in Zephaniah 3, he also creates among the non-Israelite nations, who by definition worshipped other gods, a new group that submits to him and serves him.⁴⁸ In the course of the transformation, the

of the Book of Nehemiah," in *The Crisis of Israelite Tradition: Transformation of Religious Tradition in Exilic & Post-Exilic Times* (ed. B. Becking and M.C.A. Korpel; *OtSt* 42; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 276–87.

44 Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 185; there he explores further other links between Zeph 3:8b–10 and Isaiah 18–19.

45 Berlin's argument ("Oracles," 177–78 and *passim*) that Zeph 2:5–15 conveys its message by invoking "an older mythpoetic theme" rooted in Genesis 10 reinforces this point. See the more detailed treatment of Floyd, *Minor Prophets*, 203–209.

46 *ANET* 294.

47 See further D. Kahn, "Judean Auxiliaries in Egypt's Wars against Kush," *JAOS* 127 (2007): 507–16.

48 Beck argues that 3:9–10 "sprengt den Zusammenhang zwischen den Abschnitten iii 6–8 und iii 11–13," in Beck, "Das Tag YHWHs-Verständnis von Zephania iii," *VT* 58 (2008): 159–77 (175). The contribution of 3:10 is the bringing of offerings, most likely to the temple given the movement that the verse presupposes. The expression 'bring offerings' with הִפִּיל *hifil* and מְנַחָה as object is unique, but the concept is widely attested and focuses more clearly on YHWH's temple cult than do the items mentioned in 3:9. Irsigler correctly notes that expressions like יוֹבֵל-שִׁי in Isa 18:7 are equivalent (*Zefanja*, 373).

identity of the ‘peoples’ becomes more functional (i.e., defined by what they are and do with respect to YHWH) than national. This is not the expunging of their nationality, but the gradual elevation to primacy of a religious-spiritual identity that places Yahweh at its center.

10.2.3 *The Nations Will No Longer Oppress Zion, But Will Recognize Her Glory*

In the final passage of the book dealing with the nations, they appear as passive observers of Judah’s restoration and glorification (3:18–20). This section stands off from 3:14–17 due to the change in deixis, with Yahweh here (as in 3:8–13) speaking in the first-person. The unit is not disconnected from its context, however: ‘at that time’ ties what follows to the events that began in 3:8 (note כִּי־אֵז in 3:9, 11; בְּיוֹם הַהוּא in 3:11, 16). Rather than seeing 3:18–20 as logically subsequent to 3:9–17, the phrase בַּעַת הַהִיא in 3:19 suggests that 3:18–20 presents a theme parallel to that of both prior sections, but focuses on the process rather than on the result of the divine actions in 3:8–13.⁴⁹ Here we will integrate the brief mention of the nations in 3:13, 15 in our exploration of 3:19–20.

The theme of ‘gathering’ or ‘bringing back’ dominates this section and leads to the concluding picture of Zion receiving ‘fame and praise’ in the eyes of those around her (despite their absence on the lexical level, the nations’ presence is assumed in 3:19, which closely parallels 3:20). While there are significant textual difficulties in these verses, they do not impinge upon the material relevant to the nations. The referent of ‘you’ is presumably the same as that in 3:14–17, as the context suggests no new identification.⁵⁰

After the announcement that he will gather his shamed people and make possible the renewed celebration of their religious feasts, YHWH promises to deal with those who oppress Zion. This negative statement is complemented by a positive one announcing that YHWH will bring back the ‘lame’ and ‘out-cast’ from exile (cf. 3:20; Mic 4:6–7) and will exchange their shame for ‘fame and praise,’ which presupposes that they were previously despised by those around them. The contrast is again between Yahweh’s restored people and those who denigrated them. Similarly, in 3:20 restored Zion enjoys this final vindication in the presence of an ‘other’ (בְּכָל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ).

49 The ‘gathering’ of the remnant here provides closure to the process of judgment that began with the ominous ‘gathering’ of 1:2–3; Ben Zvi, *Zephaniah*, 324.

50 Apart, that is, from whatever complications the troublesome מִמֶּךָ of 3:18 might add. Sweeney, *Zephaniah*, 204, argues carefully for a sense complementary to the process of purification which creates the remnant.

This 'other' is unmistakably distinct from restored Zion, but what is its relation to the various non-Israelite groups mentioned elsewhere in Zephaniah? Inclusive references to humanity earlier in Zephaniah (1:8, כָּל־יֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ; 3:8, כָּל־הָאָרֶץ) referred to a humanity (including Judah) threatened by divine judgment, but the setting of 3:20 lacks this dynamic element and the guilt that it presupposes. The only other use of the plural עַמִּים (3:9) clearly refers to non-Israelites (who, moreover, are to be transformed by YHWH). It may be that Zephaniah sees the larger group of the עַמִּים as divisible into two parts, one of which will eventually serve YHWH and the other of which will remain separate from his people and not participate in their restoration. The fact that 3:20 refers to an entire group (using כָּל) would imply that this final form of the 'peoples' no longer includes those who were to be transformed per 3:9.⁵¹

This conclusion seems to be confirmed by the more explicit characterization of the 'other' in 3:19, where it is termed an oppressor. While the term מַעֲנֶה is unique in Zephaniah, other terms in the same semantic field appear in 3:13, which anticipates the disappearance of any who would make the Judahite remnant tremble (מַחֲרִיד, cf. Mic 4:4) and in 3:15, which foresees the removal of Zion's enemies (אֹיְבֵךְ). The presentation of Zion's ultimate restoration in Zephaniah is thus limited to imagery in which Zion's former enemies are either transformed (3:9) or, as in 3:13, 15, 19, 20, rendered incapable of further opposition and made the audience for Zion's final exaltation.⁵²

10.3 Analysis

The development of the nations-theme in Zephaniah (judgment, minor emphasis on deliverance, major emphasis on deliverance, exclusion/distinction) is both complex and dynamic. Moreover, the contrasting, apparently final

51 While it is wise to avoid imposing a chronological or sequential reading where such is not warranted, the rarity with which עַמִּים appears in Zephaniah and the radically divergent characterizations of the two groups in 3:9 versus 3:20 make inevitable the separation of those who are transformed in 3:9 from those who see them exalted in 3:20.

52 It is unclear whether this occurs against their will or not. The same penchant for 'removing' the wicked without emphasizing their destruction appears in the creation of Judah's remnant in 3:11. The audience in 3:20 is the element most difficult to neatly integrate into the nations-theme because of its minimal characterization, but the difficulty is one of categorization, not of thematic coherence.

states for the nations (which parallel those of Judah itself) leave the interpreter with the task of comprehending radically different processes and outcomes.

10.3.1 *Lexical Overlap and Distinction between Judah and Non-Israelite Groups*

Judah and ‘the nations’ remain terminologically distinct in most of the passages in which Zephaniah discusses non-Israelite entities. While the semantics are often challenging, this lexical distinction is consistently present between Judah and its remnant on the one hand, and the nations (transformed or not) in the past, present, and future on the other. Only pandemic or globally inclusive language (e.g., earth, whole earth) occasionally pushes aside this clear distinction, and those contexts each make clear that that collective is constituted of Israelite and non-Israelite parts.

10.3.2 *Semantic Overlap between Judah and Non-Israelite Groups*

The close connection between the nations and Israel/Judah that appears at several points in the book of Zephaniah involves more than appearing on the same stage. Images of judgment and destruction, as well as images of deliverance and purification, are used for some in each group. This may help resolve some of the complexities that Holladay finds in 3:9–13 in particular, as well as elsewhere in the book.

First, the nations, like Judah, will be judged for their sins in the future.⁵³ In chapter 1, Zephaniah’s use of flood imagery applies a universal criterion of identity (sinfulness) to both groups without erasing the groups’ distinct political identities (Judah/nations). This same section focuses on the judgment of Judah before most of chapter 2 turns to pronounce judgment against the nations. The first few verses of chapter 3 (3:1–7) turn once again to a condemnation of Jerusalem before the final announcement of general punishment that leads into descriptions of the coming transformation of some within both the nations and Judah (3:9–13).

It is essential to recognize that Zephaniah makes a separation between two groups in Judah *and* between two groups among the nations. It is this distinction that lets us affirm, second, that *some* of the nations will be transformed into YHWH’s worshippers (2:11; 3:9, perhaps 3:10), just as *some* Judeans will survive the judgment to become the remnant, defined as those who have

53 While the nations are condemned for their pride, aggression, and spite toward Judah, Judah’s sins are different, covering religious (1:4–6) and social aspects (3:13) as well as an inability to observe with understanding YHWH’s actions among the nations (3:6–7).

been purified of pride and are in permanent security (3:16). There is admittedly no explanation of how the judgment of 3:8 leads to the transformations described in the following verses, but such succinctness is hardly uncommon in ancient prophetic literature, Israelite or not. A hint as to how Judah might escape punishment and restore her relationship to YHWH appears in the call to repentance in 2:1–3, and another in the (unsuccessful) motivation to take YHWH's instruction seriously as a result of seeing his judgment fall on the nations around them (3:7). We can suggest that the nations' transformation might include similar human responses (2:11; 3:9) without insisting on exact parallels between every aspect of the experience of both groups.

10.3.3 *Semantic Distinction between Judah and Non-Israelite Groups*

The oracles of Zephaniah 2, clearly set on an eschatological stage, introduce a distinction that will be operative throughout the rest of the book, between 'the nations' (except for those who are transformed in 2:11; 3:9) and the 'remnant of Judah/Israel' (referred to in various ways, but always with a form of *שְׂאֲרִית* or *יִתָּר*). In chapter 3 those nations whom YHWH does not transform evidently continue to oppose him and his restored people (3:11–13) until 'that time' (3:19) when, without being obliterated, the nations no longer pose a danger to the remnant of Judah/Israel. In this final paradigm the 'nations,' distinct from those among them who have been transformed into YHWH worshippers, can only witness the remnant's deliverance and splendor (3:20).

10.4 Conclusions

The theme of the non-Israelite nations in Zephaniah is more complex than in most other books of the Twelve. The theme's coherence depends most evidently on (1) a present-future shift that introduces distinctions within Judah and among the nations; (2) the stability of a new, essentially identical religious identity for the remnant of Judah and for some among the nations; (3) the separation of those non-Israelites whom YHWH transforms from their original identity as *עַמִּים*, and (4) a literary order for the book that does not require chronological consecution, particularly in 3:8–20.

These distinctions are clear enough that they may well bear the weight of the theme's complexity, in part because none of these details is limited to a single attestation. Rather, much like the movement of Zephaniah 1 backward through the order of creation, Zephaniah's treatment of the nations moves through the complexity of the present, with its various warring and distinct states, toward

a future that is not entirely without distinctions but which nearly attains the harmony of the original creation—the remnant’s unreconciled enemies excepted. While similar in important ways to the treatment of the nations in Amos, Micah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, Zephaniah’s integration of non-Israelites in a harmonious relationship with YHWH contrasts with a smaller number of voices elsewhere in the Twelve, including its immediate neighbor Habakkuk.⁵⁴ We will explore this diversity further in the final chapter.

54 See W. Dietrich, “Three Minor Prophets and the Major Empires: Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives on Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah,” in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve. Methodological Foundations—Redactional Processes—Historical Insights* (ed. R. Albertz, J. Nogalski, and J. Wöhrle; BZAW 433; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 147–56, esp. 154–55, for brief thoughts on the placement of Zephaniah vis-à-vis Nahum and Habakkuk.

The Nations in Haggai

Haggai's material on the nations appears in connection with two of the book's prominent themes: the temple (2:1–9) and the restoration of the Davidic monarchy (2:20–23). Apart from historical references to the current Persian ruler and to ancient Egypt, the theme lacks specificity, probably because the two contexts in which it appears are dominated by a divine intervention that will affect the whole of creation. In the case of the temple, the shaking of the nations is not clearly destructive, while in the case of the Davidic line, Zerubbabel's elevation coincides with the explicit destruction of non-Israelite entities. The following exploration of the theme will try to determine to what extent these disparate emphases can be said to cohere.

11.1 Terminology

The author of Haggai limits himself to a very small field of language for non-Israelite entities.

11.1.1 *Proper Nouns*

Only the few chronological points of reference in Haggai mention specific nations. The book's incipit makes explicit reference to the “second year of Darius the king,” and the three other dating formulae elide the reference to Darius but maintain the rest of the formula (1:15; 2:1; 2:10). A single reference to Egypt in 2:5 likewise serves only a chronological purpose.¹

11.1.2 *גוי-Language, עַם-Language, and Related Terms*

Haggai uses two sets of terminology for non-Israelite groups. The first is כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם (twice, in 2:7). As is the case throughout the Twelve, while the singular can refer to Israel/Judah, the plural habitually refers to non-Israelite entities, as H.G. May argued some time ago regarding Haggai.² The second set of references to non-Israelite groups always includes the term ‘kingdoms’ (מַמְלָכוֹת) but modifies it either as ‘a throne of kingdoms’ (כִּסֵּא מַמְלָכוֹת) or as ‘the strength of the kingdoms of the nations’ (חֹזֶק מַמְלָכוֹת הַגּוֹיִם), both in 2:22.

¹ The reference to Egypt is not present in the LXX.

² H.G. May, “‘This people’ and ‘this nation’ in Haggai,” *VT* 18 (1968): 190–97 (193).

11.1.3 *Generic Terms*

In the same context as the phrases ‘throne of kingdoms’ and ‘the strength of the kingdoms of the nations,’ Haggai refers to the military facet of these groups’ identity with the phrases ‘chariot and its riders’ (מרכבה ורכביה) and ‘horses and their riders’ (סוסים ורכביהם). These military figures are, still in 2:22, further referred to as each other’s ‘brothers.’

11.2 Characteristics and Fates of the Nations

11.2.1 *The Nations and the Restored Temple in 2:7*

It is impossible to characterize non-Israelite entities in the dating formulae that mention Darius or in the passing mention of Egypt as the general context in which YHWH established his covenant with Israel. That being the case, we move on to the first passage of interest, 2:7, where the reference to the nations is part of an oracle of encouragement in light of the lackluster beginnings of the Second Temple’s reconstruction (2:6–9). While it may appear as nothing when compared with the First Temple, all the people, including their leaders, are to be strong (חזק, three times) and work toward completing its rebuilding. Two reasons, both related to divine presence, are given: YHWH is with them as he was when he brought them out of Egypt (2:4–5a),³ and YHWH’s spirit remains among them (2:5b).

The כִּי at the head of 2:6 is likely a third reason for the people to persist in building, and shifts their perspective from the present, incomplete task of rebuilding to the future prospect of the completed temple being filled with the wealth of all the nations. This shift in perspective is tied to the shaking of the heavens, earth, sea, and dry land (2:6), an action or paradigm linked to three subsequent actions.⁴ These are YHWH’s shaking of the nations, the arrival of the wealth of all the nations, and YHWH’s filling of ‘this temple’ with glory.

3 The phrase containing the reference to Egypt is uniformly present in MT and appears in some Greek witnesses, but is not attested in those that underlie the LXX; see J. Ziegler (ed.), *Septuaginta*, vol. 13: *Duodecim prophetae* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 287.

4 J. Kessler seems correct that the shaking of the cosmos (with the participle מרעיש) should be considered as distinct, and probably preparatory to, the finite verbs (perfects with simple *waw*) that follow it; Kessler, “The Shaking of the Nations: An Eschatological View,” *JETS* 30 (1987): 159–66 (163). J. Wöhrle’s assertion, *Die frühen Sammlungen des Zwölfprophetenbuches. Entstehung und Komposition* (BZAW 360; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 301, that “die Verse 2,6–8 von einer gänzlich anderen Kosmologie als das sonstige Haggaibuch bestimmt” (with reference to 1:10) and are therefore secondary unjustifiably denies that one can coherently conceive of a world that is stable now but will be shaken later. M. Leuenberger’s observation

While the third aspect of this process is easily understood, the two preceding steps require closer examination. First, what is the shaking of the nations? J. Kessler finds the sequence of Hag 2:6–7 in general agreement with other texts that describe the shaking of the nations (Joel 2:10; 4:16[3:16]; Isaiah 19; Ezekiel 38; Zechariah 14). This sequence consists of the nations' aggression against Jerusalem, YHWH's intervention and shaking of the nations, the nations' terror and submission to YHWH, and the worship of YHWH by the remnant of those nations.⁵ Since there is no explanation of the metaphor in Haggai, our understanding of it must be based in part on how the metaphor is used elsewhere in the HB, and especially on its immediate context, which leads us to the other ambiguous element: what is/are the *הַמָּדָה* of the nations that will come to the temple (2:7)?

The singular/plural distinction just made is germane and not stylistic, since the MT as it stands pairs a plural verb (*בָּאוּ*) with a singular subject (*הַמָּדָה*). Many suggest repointing the singular nominal form to obtain the plural, and this is a minimally intrusive emendation that does no violence to the context.⁶ Alternatively, one can simply understand the term as collective and leave the text as it stands.⁷ At first glance, the contextual reference to silver and gold, which emphatically belong to YHWH, appears to leave little room for a referent other than royal Persian support (cf. Ezra 6:4 and the Behistun Inscription)⁸ or vassal payments.⁹ While it is lexically plausible that 'silver' and 'gold' refer merely to the financial support of the returnees' project by

that Hag 2:6–9, 20–23 “take into account a universal cosmos and national horizon” assumes the compatibility of these two perspectives, but identifies those two passages as updates deriving directly from political unrest in the later Persian period; Leuenberger, “Time and Situational Reference in the Book of Haggai: On Religious- and Theological-Historical Contextualizations of Redactional Processes, in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve. Methodological Foundations—Redactional Processes—Historical Insights* (ed. R. Albertz, J. Nogalski, and J. Wöhrle; BZAW 433; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 157–69, esp. 162, 165–67.

5 Kessler, “The Shaking of the Nations,” 165.

6 As suggested by BHS.

7 So A. Gelston (ed.), *The Twelve Minor Prophets* (BHQ 13; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2010), 132*; K-B, 325.

8 So H.W. Wolff, *Haggai: A Commentary* (trans. M. Kohl; CC; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 81–82; S. Amsler, *Aggée, Zacharie 1–8* (CAT XIC; Neuchâtel-Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1981), 34.

9 C.L. Meyers and E. Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8* (AB 25B; New York: Doubleday, 1987), 53; J. Kessler, *The Book of Haggai: Prophecy and Society in Early Persian Yehud* (VTSup 91; Leiden: Brill 2002), 190.

the Persian court, such an understanding fails to account for the key element in this new paradigm—the shaking of the nations—since Persia had *already* pledged its support (Ezra 6:8–10).¹⁰ Further, while Persia was surely the primary point of reference outside Yehud, it is almost certainly not sufficiently global to satisfy the extent of ‘all the nations.’ These points suggest that the riches in view are indeed vassal payments by those among the nations who, following YHWH’s awesome intervention, recognize his supremacy and submit to him as his vassals.¹¹

In summary, Haggai sketches a future in which “the arrival in Jerusalem of all foreign political entities or their emissaries, in recognition of Yahweh’s supremacy” is a key element in the furnishing or beautification (cf. כבוד, 2:7, 9) of his completed temple.¹² There is nothing in the passage that suggests incompatibility with the pattern identified by Kessler, so we may infer both the nations’ initial antipathy toward the returnees as well as the nations’ future submission to YHWH, concretely expressed in their vassal payments. The scenario is thus one in which the nations are transformed, although it cannot be determined from 2:6–7 whether all the nations are transformed (i.e., none among them are destroyed) or whether the ‘all’ that brings contributions to the temple are simply all those who remain after Yahweh’s judgment. The other passage that deals with the nations strikes a note distinctly in favor of the latter option, as we will see.

11.2.2 *The Nations and the Davidic Monarchy in 2:20–23*

The second passage that focuses on the nations closes the book of Haggai (2:20–23). The oracle it contains begins identically to that of Hag 2:6–7: אֲנִי הָרַעִישׁ אֶת־הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת־הָאָרֶץ. The second, parallel phrase in Hag 2:6c (‘the sea and the dry land’) is not present, but the phrase clearly refers to an intervention of the same magnitude as the one articulated there. Assuming on that basis that the warring nations here are set in the same circumstances as those of Hag 2:7 (i.e., when YHWH shakes the cosmos), it becomes clear that the two groups, both consisting of non-Israelites, react in radically different ways to YHWH’s shaking of them. This complexity was arguably clear to the author of Haggai as well, since he has carefully distinguished the two non-Israelite groups from one another despite locating them in the same eschatological setting. As noted in the taxonomy of terminology at the beginning of this chapter,

10 Cf. P. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire* (trans. P.T. Daniels; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 393, 453, 488.

11 See especially the careful discussion in Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 180–81, 188–95.

12 The citation is from Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah* 1–8, 53.

2:20–23 always includes the term ‘kingdoms’ (ממלכות) in its description of the non-Israelite polities, and further modifies that element with the addition of either a ‘throne’ (ממלכות כסא) or ‘strength’ and ‘the nations’ (חזק ממלכות הגוים). The use of terms based on מלך rather than גוי-language is probably due to the contrast between the nations as political-religious enemies and Zerubbabel, YHWH’s designated royal agent, and these terms simultaneously contribute to the characterization of these nations as aggressive military powers.

These expressions contain a number of intriguing features, but before studying them we should note the presence here of several verbs, and indeed an entire semantic field, not used in Hag 2:6–7.¹³ While the ‘shaking’ context is identical, here it has a new, exclusively destructive nature by virtue of the verbs הפך (twice), שמד, and ירד. While some understand הפך to refer to the political unrest at various points in the Persian empire, such a view fails to convince primarily because it falls short of the vast upheaval the verb signifies in both descriptive and predictive passages that deal with non-Israelites who do not submit to YHWH’s will.¹⁴ The classic example is the ‘overthrow’ of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:21 and various echoes), and in prophetic visions of the future the term is equally cataclysmic (e.g., Isa 34:9; Jon 3:4). The sense of שמד is self-evident, while the choice of ירד in the penultimate stich of the verse was apparently chosen in light of the image of mounted riders who are brought down, apparently by each other’s swords.¹⁵

The descriptions of the nations themselves are cast in terms coming from the same semantic field as the following descriptions of Zerubbabel, or, more precisely, of YHWH’s undisputed reign by means of his Davidic agent.¹⁶ As Kessler notes of the phrase ממלכות כסא, the plural indicates that כסא is collective, yielding the sense ‘every throne of every kingdom.’¹⁷ The parallel line focuses on these kingdoms’ might (חזק), and may add גוים to emphasize “their identity over against the people of the Lord.”¹⁸

13 This is also noted by P. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 139.

14 Pace Amsler, *Aggée, Zacharie* 1–8, 41.

15 Exod 15:5 intensifies the image by having the (dismounted?) rider descend to the bottom of the sea.

16 Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, 139, suggests that 2:22 is the cause of 2:23.

17 Kessler, *The Book of Haggai*, 223–24.

18 Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, 144. Alternatively, Meyers and Meyers suggest that ‘throne of kingdoms’ may refer to the Persian court, while ‘kingdoms of nations’ may refer to the empire’s “constituent polities” (*Haggai, Zechariah* 1–8, 67). The terms ממלכות and גוים are collocated on occasion (e.g., Isa 13:4), but are in construct elsewhere only in 2 Chron 20:6, a text notable for its similar focus on the temple and YHWH’s monergistic

The details of the destruction of the ‘throne of kingdoms’ and ‘the strength of the kingdoms of the nations’ are presented in terms that highlight this group’s militant, adversarial nature. YHWH will destroy its ‘chariot and its riders’ (מרכבה ורכביה) and ‘horses and their riders’ (סוסים ורכביהם). These military figures are referred to as each other’s ‘brother/fellow.’¹⁹ The semantic range of אח is constrained by the idiom אחו...איש, and so refers not to some common descent or to a binding agreement, but to these individuals’ joint participation in a group whose identity in this passage is defined by its opposition to YHWH.

In sharp contrast to the first passage dealing with the nations in Haggai, here YHWH’s eschatological intervention elicits a hostile response from the nations, who rise up to oppose him. As strident and coordinated as their opposition is, they will ultimately be destroyed by Yahweh, who will establish his Davidic regent as supreme once they are swept out of the way.

11.3 Analysis

11.3.1 *Lexical Overlap or Distinction between Yehud and the Nations*

It is interesting that גוי-language is used both of the Yehudites (the singular הגוי הזה, only in 2:14, in parallel with העם־הזה) and of non-Israelites (the plural forms noted earlier). Floyd observes that the comparison with the exodus, especially as a pattern for the returnees to once again build the temple and the nation, is intended to make the people see themselves as having been liberated, having received a homeland, and having YHWH’s presence among them. In this context they will be a גוי among the גוים.²⁰ It can hardly be said, however, that this partial terminological overlap (the singular/plural distinction remains significant) obscures the distinction between YHWH’s people and the non-Israelites. Indeed, even after having submitted to YHWH the nations are still referred to as הגוים in 2:7.

deliverance of his people, all of whom trust in divine deliverance following a command not to fear (2 Chron 20:15) since YHWH will be with them (2 Chron 20:17), and the mutual self-destruction of the enemy (2 Chron 20:22–23). The term ממלכות appears in construct with other terms (most frequently ארץ) in Deut 28:25; 2 Kgs 19:15, 19; 1 Chron 29:30; 2 Chron 12:8; 17:10; 20:29; 36:23; etc.

19 Wolff notes that this image may reflect a theme of the Behistun Inscription (*Haggai*, 103).

20 M. Floyd, *Minor Prophets Part 2* (FOTL 22; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 286.

11.3.2 *Semantic Identity or Distinction of Yehud and the Nations*

Semantic distinction between Yehud and the nations is both presupposed and developed by Haggai, but not in a blunt, absolute manner. In both of the passages examined above, the fact that the nations are ‘shaken’ means that their initial condition is one of alienation from, or opposition to, YHWH. Since the Yehudites are never so characterized, an initial contrast is clear on the level of characterization.

The nations’ initial characterization only holds true until YHWH intervenes, however. When he shakes the nations, 2:20–23 maintains and even sharpens this negative characterization of the nations before announcing their destruction in connection with the elevation of Zerubbabel. By contrast, the shaking of the nations in 2:6–7 makes them submit to YHWH, and their vassal or fealty payments go directly to him and his temple.

11.4 Conclusions

Haggai’s presentation of the nations-theme is relatively simple, although it is temporally dynamic and shifts from a simple to a bifocal characterization of non-Israelites. From an initial state in which the nations are basically inactive or passively opposed to YHWH, their varied responses to his definitive intervention determine their fates. Those who submit to his sovereignty are connected with the cult of the Second Temple once completed and glorified by YHWH, while those who choose to oppose YHWH will be definitively destroyed. These chronological shifts and developing characterizations add some complexity to the theme, but hardly enough to render it incoherent.

Haggai’s first nations-pericope focuses on the embellishment of the temple by means of contributions from ‘all of the nations.’ The nations of Hag 2:6–7 seem to remain in their historic territories, rather along the lines of an empire under YHWH’s rule (cf. Amos 9:11–12). In this context Haggai envisions the coexistence of two groups, some of the nations and the returnees, under a single religious umbrella, that of submission to YHWH. The characterization of the nations in this role is entirely free of the military or aggressive elements that predominate in 2:20–23, and focuses instead on their expression of fidelity and submission to YHWH via the contribution of their חמדה.

The second passage in Haggai that treats the nations (2:20–23) focuses on the elevation of the Davidic descendant Zerubbabel (2:23) and the corresponding destruction of the nations. Far from submitting to YHWH after being ‘shaken,’ these nations persist in militant rebellion against YHWH (no third party is in view as their adversary). Consequently, this pericope foresees a

radically different fate than that of the nations whose wealth comes to the Second Temple, but that fate is entirely consistent with their negative characterization.²¹ Although J. Wöhrle obscures this difference by attributing both 2:6–8 and 2:21b–22 to the same redactional layer (Fremdvölker 1), which on his view is “characterized by a hostile attitude toward the foreign nations,”²² the lexical and especially the semantic aspects of the two passages require that the different characterizations, referents, and fates of the two groups be distinguished. This is corroborated by the various degrees of proximity between Haggai and Zechariah, since Zechariah (both in Zechariah 1–8 and 9–14) introduces similar distinctions into the group of non-Israelite nations.

21 Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 53.

22 See Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen*, 321, and his “Israel’s Identity and the Threat of the Nations,” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context* (ed. O. Lipschits, G.N. Knoppers, and M. Oeming; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 153–72 (155–56).

The Nations in Zechariah

The complexity of the book of Zechariah is well-known, and the isolation of a single theme within it reduces the difficulty of our task only a little. Still, while it remains complicated, the nations-theme in Zechariah has relatively clear contours at many points, and the very radicality of some of these contours will help us trace it.

12.1 Terminology

12.1.1 גוי-Language

The prominence of the nations-theme in Zechariah is evident in the frequency of גוי-language, which is used only of non-Israelite ethnic groups and is always in the plural. Note the following references:

- 1:15, Yahweh is angry with those nations who are שׂאננים;
- 2:4[1:21], the four horns who scattered Judah; 2:12[8], those who plundered Judah;
- 2:15[2:11, with רבים], those who become Yahweh's people; likewise 8:22;
- 7:14; 8:13, the place of Judah's exile;
- 8:23, non-Israelites of all languages (אנשים מכל לשנות גוים) will recognize that God is with Judah's remnant;
- 9:10, Judah's eschatological ruler will speak peace לגוים and his dominion will be from sea to sea;
- 12:3, כל גווי הארץ will oppose transformed Judah in the future; 12:9, Yahweh will destroy 'all the nations that attack Jerusalem';
- 14:2, 3, Yahweh will gather 'all' the nations against Jerusalem in battle, then fight against them himself, and their wealth will be pillaged, 14:14;
- 14:16, those nations who survive Yahweh's attack (כל-הנותר מכל-הגוים) will worship him in Jerusalem annually;
- 14:18–19, those nations who survive YHWH's attack on Jerusalem but do not worship him will be plagued or subjected to drought.

12.1.2 עַם-Language

Zechariah uses עַם-language as frequently as גוי-language, most often in the plural (unless modified with a pronominal suffix or in construct). It is used of Israel (usually in construct with שְׂאֵרִית) and of non-Israelites alike, and it appears a few times in parallel with גוֹיִם (e.g., 8:20, 22; 12:3; in 14:12 it follows a prior reference to ‘nations’ in 14:2, 3). We will not consider the uses which refer to Judahites or the remnant (e.g., 7:5; 8:6, 7, 11, 12; 9:16; 13:9; 14:2) except for the few cases in which these passages are directly tied to some significant relationship of the nations to Judahites.

An especially important use of גוי- and עַם-language together is found in 2:15[11], where ‘many nations’ (גוֹיִם) will join themselves to YHWH and become ‘my people’ (וְהָיוּ לִי לְעָם). The two terms also appear in 8:22, which treats them as nearly co-referential: ‘many peoples’ (עַמִּים רַבִּים) and ‘mighty nations’ (גוֹיִם עֲצוּמִים) will seek YHWH. The phrase וְהָיוּ לִי לְעָם by itself occurs with a different referent in 8:8, where God returns his exiled people to their land with the result that ‘they shall be my people.’

12.1.3 Proper Nouns

Zechariah occasionally refers to peoples or territories by mention of cities, regions, or empires. These include (daughter of) Babylon (2:11[7]; 6:10), the land of Shinar (5:11), the land of Hadrach and Damascus (9:1), Tyre (9:3), Ashkelon, Ekron, Gaza, Ashdod, and the Philistines (9:5–6), Greece (9:13, יוֹן), Egypt (14:18, part of the construct phrase מִשְׁפַּחוֹת מִצְרַיִם), and Canaanite (14:21).

12.1.4 Other Terms

A smattering of other terms is used to refer to one or more non-Israelite groups, and on occasion to the whole world. Note ‘the whole earth’ (1:11, 4:10, 14, etc.), ‘alien’ (גֵּר, 7:10, as a group that Yehudites must not oppress), the ‘north country’ (6:8 *bis*), ‘land of the east/west’ (8:7), neighboring kings (11:6), and tribes (of the earth, מִשְׁפַּחוֹת הָאָרֶץ, in 14:17; of Egypt, 14:18).

The nations also appear under the image of the ‘horns’ in 2:1–4[1:18–21]. The metaphor retains its combative sense there, symbolizing the power exerted by the nations (קִרְנוֹת הַגּוֹיִם, 2:4[1:21]) whose aggression has ‘scattered’ Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. It is difficult to determine with any confidence the referent(s) of the horns. For historical reasons it is plausible to suggest that Babylon is among the nations referred to here, but the anonymity of this reference and the fact that Babylon’s characterization would be shared with other nations make such an identification of limited importance.¹

1 For arguments in favor of a Babylonian referent, see M. Boda, “Terrifying the Horns: Persia and Babylon in Zechariah 1:7–6:15,” *CBQ* 67 (2005): 22–32.

Incidental occurrences that refer to the nations as the linguistic milieu in which Israel/Judah has been a byword of cursing (8:13) or as the point of departure for returning exiles (10:9–10) will be left aside here to facilitate a clear focus on the theme's primary contours. Similarly, the mention of Shinar in 5:10 identifies wickedness with Babylonian religion but says nothing of the site's fate.² 'Those far away' (6:15) likely does not refer to non-Israelites given the historical antipathy towards non-Israelite participation in the rebuilding of the temple attested in Ezra-Nehemiah and the fact that Zechariah consistently reserves openness toward the nations for the future. Finally, the covenant 'with all the peoples' (11:10) apparently refers to God's unilateral control of the nations that had restrained them from aggression against Yehud.³

12.2 Characteristics and Fates of the Nations

We are now in a position to explore the roles that the non-Israelite nations play in Zechariah. As has often been the case in the Twelve, their identity and role are closely connected to that of Israel/Judah. To facilitate our focus on the link between characterization and destiny, and in light of the absence of a clear flow in chapters 1–11, we will group together material announcing weal and woe for the nations in all but the last three chapters of the book (Zechariah 12–14), which share a clear connection to the book's depiction of the eschatological siege of Jerusalem.

12.2.1 *Punishment of the Nations*

12.2.1.1 Zechariah 1:7–2:17[13]

Against the background of the opening pericope's retrospect on Judah's exile and its causes, the first three visions revisit the Judah-nations relationship in order to encourage the Yehudite audience. In the past, YHWH used the nations to punish Judah (1:15), but they plundered her (2:12[8]) and made 'the pleasant land desolate' (7:14) in such a way as to incur divine wrath. The Judean exile is

2 See H. Delkurt, "Sin and Atonement in Zechariah's Night Visions," in *Tradition in Transition: Haggai and Zechariah 1–8 in the Trajectory of Hebrew Theology* (ed. M. Boda and M. Floyd; LHBOTS 475; London: T & T Clark, 2008), 235–51.

3 So T. McComisky, "Zechariah," in *Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi* (vol. 3 of *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*; ed. T. McComisky; 3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 1003–1244 (1197). M. Boda is similar, speaking of the 'blessing' of the nations upon Israel, *Haggai, Zechariah* (NIVAC; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 463; cf. Hos 2:20 and Jer 2:3. C.L. Meyers and E. Meyers think that the *prophet's* covenant is in view, and that the 'peoples' are Israel/Judah, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8* (AB 25B; New York: Doubleday, 1987), 270–71.

probably in view in these passages as well as in the statement that the ‘horns of the nations’ have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem in 2:4[1:21].

Closely connected to the nations’ excessive or inappropriate aggression against Judah in the past is their attitude in the present.⁴ ‘The whole earth’ (1:11), more specifically the nations who are ‘settled and tranquil’ (יִשְׁבֵּת וְשָׁקֵט), 1:11) and ‘at ease’ (שָׁאֵן), 1:15), should *not* be so while YHWH’s people remain in distress, as the angelic petition in 1:12 makes clear.⁵ YHWH’s anger against these nations far surpasses that which entailed the widespread destruction of Judah and the exile of much of its population because their excesses furthered Judah’s harm (רָעָה), 1:15).⁶

12.2.1.2 Zechariah 6:1–8

The theme of rest in foreign territory connects this last vision to the first, but with a key difference.⁷ While in chapter 1 the nations were at ease despite their mistreatment of and disdain for YHWH’s people, after the various divine interventions described in the other visions it is now YHWH’s own spirit who is at rest in the north. This last vision is followed immediately by an oracle (6:9–15) dealing with the reconstruction of the temple, which implies that the settling down of Yahweh’s spirit signifies the necessary peace and stability required for

4 The arguments of J. Wöhrle for the secondary nature of much of 1:14–17, especially because of its focus on Jerusalem, are not convincing; *Die frühen Sammlungen des Zwölfprophetenbuchs: Entstehung und Komposition* (BZAW 360; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 326–27.

5 S. Amsler, “Zacharie 1–8,” in S. Amsler, A. Lacocque, and R. Vuilleumier, *Aggée, Zacharie, Malachie* (CAT XIC; Neuchâtel and Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1981), 45–125 (63), captures the nations’ mood well as “insouciance.” Not only does the focus on Judah’s ongoing woes suggest that it is best to understand the calm referred to here in this limited sense, but the socio-political setting of the reign of Darius I gives little grounds for seeing widespread calm in the Persian empire. The Behistun Inscription of Darius I understandably puts inordinate emphasis on his success in bringing peace, but hardly presents it as a simple or rapid process. A. Wolters explores a possible allusion to the death of the king of Babylon in light of the parallels between 1:11c and Isa 14:7a; see his “‘The Whole Earth Remains at Peace’ (Zechariah 1:11): The Problem and an Intertextual Clue,” *Tradition in Transition: Haggai and Zechariah 1–8 in the Trajectory of Hebrew Theology* (ed. in M. Boda and M. Floyd; LHBOTS 475; London: T & T Clark, 2008), 128–143.

6 The general sense is clear even if the expression עֲזָרוֹ לְרָעָה is unparalleled; cf. Isa 10:5–15. Meyers and Meyers survey several text-critical and lexical solutions to the quandary, *Haggai, Zechariah 1–8*, 122.

7 The motif of the mounted patrol also suggests a meaningful link between the two; cf. A. Wolters, “Zechariah, Book of,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets* (ed. M. Boda and J.G. McConville; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 889–99 (893).

the project's success.⁸ The phrase 'land of the north' could refer to the place of Judah's exile generally, to Babylon as the longstanding opponent of YHWH and his people, to Persia, or symbolically to Israel's enemies.⁹ This ambiguity limits the confidence with which this passage can be classified with others that clearly present the punishment of the nations, although the divine wrath announced in 1:15 has presumably been exhausted or appeased by some type of intervention among the nations.¹⁰

12.2.1.3 Zechariah 9:1–8

The frequently-referenced מִשָּׁח that recurs in 12:1 appears for the first time in Zechariah here, where it introduces an oracle against the nations in 9:1–8. The oracle can be divided into three parts, with Tyre serving (appropriately) as a bridge: the nations or cities are described in 9:1–3, their punishment is foretold in 9:4–7, and YHWH's commitment to protect his house against all aggression concludes the oracle in 9:8. Although this structure overlooks the integration of a Philistine remnant in Israel/Judah in 9:7b, the separate treatment of that short passage below allows the general structure to stand.

While Tyre's destruction receives the most attention, most of the other entities named are also presented as suffering some misfortune in keeping with the general tone of an oracle of judgment concerning the nations.¹¹ The list of polities begins in the north and generally follows the Levantine coast southward to historically Philistine territory. The reasons given for this divine campaign against these groups include their pride (of Tyre, 9:3, and Ashkelon, 9:6), abominations (of Philistines, 9:7), and illegitimate gain (of Tyre, 9:3). As such, and apart from 9:7b, this is a typical oracle against the nations, tying their punishment to their misdeeds, self-sufficiency and pride. In other words, the nations here (again, apart from the purified Philistine remnant in 9:7b) are characterized as guilty, and their fate is therefore inevitable destruction.

It suffices to mention Greece (9:13) only in passing given its fleeting appearance in Zechariah. While debate typically surrounds the date of the passage due to its potential relevance to events in the second century BCE, the global horizon evident in the context (9:10) and the syntagm בְּנֵי יוֹן make it at least

8 M. Selman, "Zechariah: Theology of," *NIDOTTE* 4:1304.

9 Meyers and Meyers discuss the various possibilities in *Haggai, Zechariah* 1–8, 330–31.

10 So also Amsler, "Zacharie 1–8," 104.

11 Pace Meyers and Meyers, who suggest that Hadrach, Damascus, and Hamath are "not subjected to the violent action of Yahweh," *Zechariah* 9–14 (AB 25C; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 92.

equally plausible that a precise polity is not in view.¹² In any case, the absence of precise characterization requires the interpreter to treat that cryptic reference within a larger framework for punished non-Israelite groups in Zechariah.

12.2.1.4 Zechariah 10:11

Egypt and Assyria are mentioned here in the context of a larger oracle of deliverance for ‘the house of Judah and the house of Joseph’ (10:6) that predicts their return from exile. Egypt and Assyria are first mentioned as specific points ‘among the nations’ and ‘in far countries’ (10:9) from which the exiles will leave for their homeland (10:10). More interesting for our purposes is the characterization in 10:11 of Assyria and Egypt (in the imagery of surging waves; cf. Jer 51:42, 55) as proud, powerful opponents. It is hard to know to what extent the author was aware of the subordination of both these powers to Persia,¹³ but it is very unlikely that he was unaware of the fact that Assyria no longer existed as the empire that had exiled the northern kingdom. The author’s selection of only two locales outside Israel in which exiles or expatriates lived (cf. the much broader perspective of 10:9), and the fact that Assyria and Egypt were the northernmost and southernmost oppressors of Israel/Judah, means that their mention probably constitutes synecdoche. Accordingly, readers should avoid an overly rigid identification of the powers named here,¹⁴ since all such powers will be undone by YHWH’s repatriation of his people.¹⁵

12.2.2 *Some Nations Will Join Israel/Judah*

Much like the structure of the book itself, we move from an emphasis on the judgment of the nations toward a focus on their partial deliverance.

12.2.2.1 Zechariah 2:5–17

The third vision, partially explored above, begins with the image of someone about to measure Jerusalem for the purpose of rebuilding it, but the idea of a literal rebuilding is quickly eclipsed by the prediction that Jerusalem’s walls

12 This latter point is made by Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 421.

13 While Assyria had fallen well over a century before the setting for Zechariah, Egypt came under Cambyses’s control only in 525; M. Van De Mieroop, *A History of Ancient Egypt* (Blackwell History of the Ancient World; Chichester: Wiley & Blackwell, 2011), 304.

14 Meyers and Meyers mention the chiasmic order in which Egypt and Assyria appear in 10:10, 11, *Zechariah* 9–14, 227.

15 So also A. Lacocque, “Zacharie 9–14,” in S. Amsler, A. Lacocque, and R. Vuilleumier, *Aggée, Zacharie, Malachie* (CAT XIC; Neuchâtel and Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1981), 127–216 (168).

will no longer be useful. Not only will her population increase radically and so exceed their limits, YHWH himself will be a wall around Jerusalem and the glory at her center (2:5–9[1–5]).¹⁶ The rebuilding of Jerusalem motivates the following call to return from Babylon, which will become the plunder of its slaves when YHWH shakes his hand over/against them (2:10–14[6–10]).

Following this announcement of pending destruction against Babylon and nations like her (i.e., those that assault YHWH's chosen people), we encounter a sharply contrasting picture: 'Many nations will join themselves to YHWH in that day, and shall be my people.' The phrase *גלוו על-יהוה* or *גלוו אל-יהוה* occurs only a few times in the HB, once with Israelites and Judahites as its subject (Jer 50:5), and several times with non-Israelites as its subject (Isa 56:3, 6; Est 9:27 [cf. Est 8:17]; the use in Dan 11:34 is not relevant).¹⁷ While the sense of religious adherence is fairly clear from the expression itself, the following phrase makes abundantly clear that these 'many nations' will share Israel's status as YHWH's chosen people: *והיו לי לעם*. This concept is widespread in the HB/OT as an essential element of Israel's identity from Sinai onward (for the identical syntagm, see Lev 26:12; Deut 4:20; 7:6; 26:18, 19; 27:9; etc.; cf. Deut 14:2). Notably, of the dozens of occurrences in the HB, this is the only time that the phrase *והיו לי לעם* is used of non-Israelite entities (the other occurrence of the phrase in Zech 8:8 refers to Zion). Whereas in the previous paragraph the reversal of the roles of Judah and the nations will confirm the divine origin of the oracle (2:13c[9c]), here the transformation of some of the nations will have the same effect (2:15c[11c]).

This juxtaposition of contrasting fates for two groups that are both part of the larger 'nations' causes consternation for some interpreters. Wöhrle denies that 2:15[11] is coherent with 2:10–14[6–10] because "[d]ie Zuwendung der Völker zu Jhwh steht in direktem Widerspruch zur Ansage des Völkergerichts in 2,13."¹⁸ But this constitutes contradiction only if the same group is in view in both cases, something Wöhrle assumes but does not prove. There are, on the contrary, several indications that two groups can be distinguished within the larger category of the 'nations.' Chronologically, while the nations plunder Israel in the present (with participles), their judgment or transformation

16 M. Stead has argued convincingly for reuse in Zechariah 1–2 of material from Lamentations, here Lam 2:3, 7–9, where the walls and fire were indices of Jerusalem's destruction. Stead, "Sustained Allusion in Zechariah 1–2," in *Tradition in Transition: Haggai and Zechariah 1–8 in the Trajectory of Hebrew Theology* (ed. M.J. Boda and M.H. Floyd; London: T & T Clark, 2008), 144–70 (151–52).

17 For more general socio-political uses, cf. Ps 83:9[8], where it is implicit, and Isa 14:1.

18 Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen*, 331.

is set in the future (2:13, 15[9, 11]). In terms of characterization, the contrast between the plunderers and those who join themselves to YHWH could hardly be sharper, and the relevant uses of Nifal לִוּה elsewhere connect that action with repentance and a deep commitment to following YHWH's will (Isa 56:6; Jer 50:4–5). Moreover, the reflexive rather than passive sense of Nifal לִוּה makes the volitional involvement of this group of the nations essential to their characterization.¹⁹ Finally, although Zech 2:15[11] stands out because it is the first time in Zechariah that the nations are associated with deliverance, it is hardly without parallel in either Zechariah 1–8 or Zechariah 9–14 (if those two parts of the book should indeed be seen as substantially separate rather than merely distinct), as the following explorations will show.²⁰

12.2.2.2 Zechariah 8:20–23

Coming at the end of a series of oracles announcing Zion's restoration beginning in Zech 8:1, 8:20–23 is the final such oracle before the focus turns temporarily to the nations in 9:1–8. The passage offers two descriptions of those who will come to the Jerusalem temple once Zion has been restored. The following structure highlights their chiasmic relationship in Zech 8:20–22 (8:23 stands rather on its own, but also ties the two groups together in nearly the same way).²¹

עמים (8:20)
 וישבי ערים רבות (8:20)
 וישבי אחת (8:21)
 עמים רבים וגוים עצומים (8:22)

The first group, designated וישבי ערים רבות, are almost certainly Israelites: note the identical phrase יהוה את־פני יהוה, 'entreat the favor of YHWH' as the goal of the Bethel delegates in Zech 7:2. These Israelites decide of their own volition to 'entreat YHWH's favor' and to 'seek YHWH of Hosts.' A clear emphasis on the widespread, corporate nature of this Jewish movement toward Jerusalem appears from its dialogical אחת אל־אחת, 'one to another' (the latter as direct speech) and cohortative nature (אלכה and נלכה, both as direct speech).

¹⁹ Cf. K-B, 522.

²⁰ M. Boda, "Babylon in the Book of the Twelve," *HBAI* 3 (2014): 225–48 (esp. 233–38) and others have noted various connections between Zech 2:11, 14–15 and 9:9–10.

²¹ Pace Meyers and Meyers, *Haggai, Zechariah* 1–8, 436, the chiasmic order of the participants in 8:20–22 makes an Israelite referent for עמים unlikely here.

The second group is referred to by עמים in Zech 8:20, expanded as עמים רבים in Zech 8:22. Consistently in Zechariah (as elsewhere in the Twelve, moreover), the plural nouns עמים and גוים never refer to Israelites/Yehudites. While there is always the possibility of an exceptional usage, the contrast between non-Israelites (אנשים מכל לשונות הגוים) and a Yehudite (איש יחודי) in the following verse rules out that possibility here.

A second chiasm that spans Zech 8:21–22 appears in the inverted order of the key verbal elements ‘entreat/appease YHWH . . . seek’ of 8:21 as ‘seek . . . entreat/appease YHWH’ in 8:22 (with the elements בקש and את־פני יהוה). This intentional comparison, together with the absence of any other difference, makes clear that the disposition of these non-Israelites with respect to YHWH in 8:22 is identical to that of the Israelites in 8:21.

The final verse of the section is introduced by another divine speech formula, but is closely related to 8:20–22. The universalistic facet of the preceding oracle (‘many peoples . . . strong nations’) is heightened here by the use of ‘ten men from all the languages of the nations’ (with גוים). Further, in much the same way as the description of the non-Israelites in 8:22 mirrors that of the Jews in 8:21, so here non-Jews echo the cohortative speech of the returning Israelites in 8:20 (נלצה). An intriguing difference between the two groups is that these non-Israelites come to Jerusalem by following Israelites (עמכם), since ‘God’ (אלהים) is known to be with his (Israelite) people—a rare specification of the motives which draw the nations to Zion.²² The ratio of 1:10 for Jews—non-Israelites is a phenomenal multiplication of those who come to know YHWH as Israel does.

12.2.2.3 Zechariah 9:7

The passage of which this verse is part, 9:1–8, was treated above insofar as it describes the punishment of non-Israelite nations. There it was noted that 9:7 is of a quite different nature from the surrounding material. Following a fourfold delineation of Philistine cities in 9:5–6a and a general reference to ‘Philistines’ in 9:6b, the grammatically singular object of YHWH’s actions 9:7 is most likely a collective for the Philistines as a whole.²³ There YHWH affirms, “I will remove their blood from their mouth, and their detestable things from

22 Meyers and Meyers remark that “Zechariah’s vision of the future is fully inclusive . . . and at the same time it is rooted in the particularity of the geographic and sociopolitical epicenter of Yahwism.” *Haggai, Zechariah* 1–8, 444.

23 Such an understanding is in harmony with the description in 9:7 of Philistine cult practices which could hardly be restricted to one or another of their cities. The practice in view is one highly objectionable to the normative world envisioned by the Hebrew Bible

between their teeth. Then a remnant they too will be for our God, and will be like a clan in Judah, and Ekron like a Jebusite.”

Despite the egregious nature of this practice from the HB’s normative perspective, none other than YHWH will remove (Hif סור) blood from the Philistines’ mouth, and they (still a collective singular) will be a remnant for ‘our God.’ The existence of the Philistine remnant is emphasized by its placement at the head of the phrase and the addition of גַּם־הוּא, before it is stated that this remnant will belong to God. Then follow two comparisons, the first focused on the Philistine collective, the second on Ekron. The first predicts that the Philistines will be ‘like a tribe in Judah,’²⁴ effectively rendering genetic descent irrelevant as a criterion for inclusion in Israel and simultaneously affirming the Philistines’ religious purity on the basis of 9:7a. The second focuses on Ekron in order to compare it with Jebusites, thereby highlighting the integration of non-Israelites into the Judean kingdom (cf. 2 Chron 8:7–8).²⁵

While material culture makes it possible that some of Ekron’s inhabitants in the late Iron Age were of Israelite origin, it is unnecessary to understand the inclusion in Judah of the (at least predominantly) Philistine population of Ekron on that basis.²⁶ On the contrary, the text presumes the population’s non-Israelite ethnicity and explicitly identifies its illicit cultic practice, but does not restrict the purification to Israelite ‘dispersed ones’ or the like, although it could easily have done so. Moreover, the immediately preceding focus on Philistines makes any distinction other than נִשְׂאֵר unnecessary.

This passage is remarkable for its explicit affirmation that YHWH will transform some of the Philistines so that they abandon illicit religious practices. The placement of this verse at the end of an oracle that also announces the destruction or woe of much of Philistia presents us once again with the problem of coherence. J. Wöhrle presents a straightforward (if blunt) redactional solution to the problem of Philistia’s contrasting fates here by assigning 9:7 to an isolated addition.²⁷ As I will argue in more detail below, such an approach

(e.g., Gen 9:4), apparently involving the consumption of the blood and flesh of the sacrificed animal; cf. Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah* 9–14, 113.

24 The collective sense fits well here, and there is no basis for amending the text; cf. Gelston, *The Twelve Minor Prophets* (BHQ 13; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2010), *sub loco*.

25 See S. Japhet, *I & II Chronicles* (OTL; London: SCM, 1993), 624, who notes that the Chronicler makes the conscription of non-Israelites only partial, in contrast to 1 Kgs 9:20.

26 This point is raised but not explored by Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah* 9–14, 117–18.

27 J. Wöhrle, *Der Abschluss des Zwölfprophetenbuchs: Buchübergreifende Redaktionsprozesse in den späten Sammlungen* (BZAW 389; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 72–73.

fails to deal with the explanation given in the text itself for the dual fates of the Philistines, with only those from whom Yahweh removes illicit religious practices escaping his judgment. Further, Wöhrle's argument that nowhere else in Zechariah 9–14 is a particular non-Israelite group singled out for deliverance is arbitrary (by the same token, one could eliminate 5:11 as the only reference to Shinar, etc.) and neglects the significant thematic continuity that many have observed between Zechariah 1–8 and 9–14.²⁸

12.2.3 *The Nations Enjoy Peace under the Rule of Zion's Coming King (9:10)*

This passage merits separate treatment because although it is part of the larger group of passages that envisions well-being for some of the nations in the future, the image of experiencing peace under Judah's eschatological king is distinct from the image of joining Israel that unites the passages examined above. The context (Zech 9:9–13) begins with a call to Zion to rejoice at the arrival of her king (9:9), and moves on to announce peace (9:10) and liberation (9:11–12) as well as victory over 'Greece' (9:13).

As is often the case in Zechariah, the nations have more than one fate in a single literary unit. While Lacocque assumes that divine victory has totally eliminated Israel's enemies, this would remove the need for the king to 'speak peace' to the nations.²⁹ Indeed, before the king speaks peace to the nations, it is *Israel's* chariots and horses that are destroyed, and the manner in which the king arrives hardly identifies him as a blood-drenched conqueror.³⁰

The positive contribution of this kingly proclamation is probably best understood as performative speech: 'promise peace' or 'command well-being'.³¹ While the syntagm *דבר שלום* occurs elsewhere (Gen 37:4; Est 10:3; Ps 28:3; Ps 35:20; Ps 85:9; Jer 9:8), the only directly comparable instance is Ps 85:9, where the author expresses the confidence that YHWH will 'speak peace' to his 'holy ones' provided they do not again act foolishly. In the next line of that psalm YHWH's salvation is said to be near (Ps 85:10). Given the decisive, radical nature of the peace presented in Zech 9:10a, it is difficult to imagine that

28 See, e.g., M.H. Floyd, "Zechariah and Changing Views of Second Temple Judaism in Recent Commentaries," *RelSRev* 25 (1999): 257–63; H. Gonzalez, "Zechariah 9–14 and the Continuation of Zechariah during the Ptolemaic Period," *JHS* 13 (2013): article 9, 12–15.

29 Lacocque, "Zacharie 9–14," 155.

30 This point is made by I. Duguid, "Messianic Themes in Zechariah 9–14," in *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts* (ed. P. Satterthwaite, R.S. Hess and G.J. Wenham; Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), 265–80 (268), cited in Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 417.

31 The latter is suggested by M. Tate, *Psalms 51–100* (WBC 20; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), 364, for the same idiom with God as verbal subject.

the offer or realization of peace to the nations would not establish a similarly permanent situation. This is confirmed by the following affirmation in 9:10c that the king's reign will extend across the globe.³²

12.2.4 *The Siege of Jerusalem by the Nations and Its Outcomes* (*Zech 12:1–9; 14:1–21*)

Two passages near the end of Zechariah are distinguished by their setting 'on that day'³³ (arguably the Day of Yahweh, although this is immaterial to our investigation) and especially by their presentation of the siege of Jerusalem in the future. The passages share this primary subject, but differ on a number of secondary points. While in chapter 12 the nations' opposition is clearly their choice (they have already laid siege to Jerusalem when Yahweh intervenes, 12:2), in the latter passage Yahweh says he will gather 'all' the nations against Jerusalem in battle (14:2). Further, Yahweh's intervention in chapter 12 brings about the destruction of all of the nations (esp. 12:6), while in chapter 14 Yahweh strikes 'all the people who fought against Jerusalem' with a plague (14:12) but afterwards is worshipped annually by pilgrims to Jerusalem who are identified as 'all who are left of all the nations' (14:16). To complicate matters further, even this paradigm is unstable, since 14:17 presents at least the possibility that some of the 'families of the earth' would not 'come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts'—they will be punished as well. Here we will treat 12:1–9 briefly given the relative simplicity of its presentation of the nations, and then explore chapter 14 in more detail.

12.2.4.1 Zechariah 12:1–9

This section presents the nations with a static identity, that of Jerusalem's enemies. That monochromatic characterization permits an equally simple divine intervention which achieves the destruction of 'all the nations that come against Jerusalem.' The text begins with the effect of Jerusalem on the 'surrounding peoples'—she will intoxicate them with deleterious rather than

32 Cf. the link between the eschatological king and peace in Mic 5:5. On שָׁלוֹם in the Psalms, see H.J. Kraus, *Theology of the Psalms* (trans. K. Crim; CC; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 119–20, who suggests that it can be the well-being of the land or of the people, or the king's responsibility (the fourth sense suggested by Kraus seems difficult to distinguish from the first two).

33 E.J.C. Tigchelaar, *Prophets of Old and the Day of the End: Zechariah, the Book of the Watchers and Apocalyptic* (*OtSt 35*; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 110.

benign results (12:2).³⁴ Similarly, Jerusalem will be like a stone the lifting of which will severely harm ‘all the peoples’ (12:3).³⁵

These negative effects are explained in terms of action against Jerusalem’s enemies, first by YHWH (12:4–5), then by ‘the clans of Judah,’ who will be a ‘flaming torch among sheaves’ that devours ‘all the surrounding peoples’ (12:6). A summary statement (12:9) again adopts the perspective of direct divine involvement in which YHWH ‘seeks with a view to destroying’ (בקש להשמד) all the nations that come against Jerusalem.³⁶

The siege depicted in this section seems to involve all the nations of the world (12:3a, b), but the description should probably not be pressed so far as to preclude the possibility that some would not participate in aggression against Jerusalem. The description of these nations and peoples as ‘surrounding’ or ‘coming against Jerusalem,’ and the fact that Zechariah frequently speaks in the same breath of some nations undergoing divine judgment and of others being spared or becoming part of renewed Israel/Judah (this last point presupposes some coherence of the theme across the book), suggest that ‘nations’ does not invariably refer to a pandemic, all-inclusive category. Each of these points intersects the book’s final perspective on the nations, so an exploration of chapter 14 will also allow us to evaluate their validity in light of a closely related text.

12.2.4.2 Zechariah 14:1–21

While the material in Zech 14 is not without precedent earlier in the book (e.g., 9:1–8; 12:1–9), this pericope’s more comprehensive scope, greater detail, and position at the end of the book justify separate treatment of it. It is important to underline that our focus is limited, as far as possible, to the nations-theme alone. While it intersects other themes and is itself predominant in the chapter, our goal is not to address every aspect of the chapter’s cohesion and coherence.³⁷

34 See the similar passages listed in Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 483, and note esp. Isa 51:17, 22.

35 The two other uses of the verb (Lev 19:28; 21:5) refer to self-inflicted cuts as part of a rite of mourning for the dead; see B.A. Levine, *Leviticus* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: JPS, 1989), 133, 143. The expression here is stronger given the infinitive—finite verb pair.

36 Regardless of whether the infinitive expresses purpose or result, the outcome (i.e., the destruction of the nations) seems inevitable since God is the verbal subject.

37 The more prominent literary problems are surveyed in M. Beck, *Der “Tag YHWHs” im Dodekapropheten: Studien im Spannungsfeld von Traditions- und Redaktionsgeschichte* (BZAW 356; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 216–27. Tigchelaar considers the mention of Judah in 14:14a to be a gloss for syntactic and semantic reasons, *Prophets of Old*, 240–41.

The interpretation of Zechariah 14 remains extremely difficult even with a horizon limited as much as possible to the non-Israelite nations.³⁸ There is no clear chronological line that can be followed through the passage, although here and there cause and effect dictates some general relationship (e.g., the ‘survivors’ of 14:16 have evidently survived earlier divine aggression against the nations). Approaching the chapter in terms of movements toward and away from Jerusalem allows us to capture the varied involvement of the nations and to uncover, when possible, their logical or chronological relationship to other movements in the chapter.³⁹

Unlike the description offered in 12:1–9, the attack on Jerusalem described here will be (temporarily) successful.⁴⁰ The initial description of despoiling is augmented by the fall of the city, the plundering of its houses, and the rape of its women. The clear distinction within Jerusalem’s population, with half sent into exile, underlines both the covenantal basis for that group’s punishment and the fact that chapter 14 presents the punishment of *some* from Jerusalem alongside the destruction of *some* from among the nations.⁴¹ As M. Boda and others have observed, “connections between Zechariah 14 and Isaiah 13 suggest that the prophet is identifying Jerusalem with its former enemy Babylon,”⁴² and this plasticity in Judah’s identity will soon appear in the identity of the nations as well.

The description of the attack on Jerusalem is ended by the prediction in 14:3 that YHWH will fight against the nations that attack her, but this retribution is not developed until those in Jerusalem have fled through a valley opened by YHWH and after a lengthy description of Jerusalem’s eventual exaltation.⁴³ The section 14:12–15 thus returns in non-sequential fashion to the theme of YHWH’s punishment of Jerusalem’s attackers. Its placement seems

38 M. Butterworth is perhaps in the minority when he suggests that “ch. 14 as a whole, despite its uncertain text, displays a logic and structure that must be presumed to have been intended by its author/editor(s);” *Structure and the Book of Zechariah* (JSOTSup 130; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 235.

39 Compare the similar conclusions of Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14*, 451.

40 J. Hausmann, “Jerusalem und die Völker: Beobachtungen zu Sacharja 14,” in *Die unwiderstehliche Wahrheit: Studien zur alttestamentliche Prophetie* (ed. R. Lux and E.-J. Waschke; ABG 23; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2006), 389–99 (390).

41 Lacocque, “Zacharie,” 199–200.

42 Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 523. This is partially borne out by the rarity of the collocation of כרת + עיר and the fact that in its only other attestation (Ps 101:8) the king commits to eliminating ‘those who do iniquity’ from the city.

43 As Boda notes, there is no reason not to identify the opponents in 14:2 and those in 14:12–15; *Haggai, Zechariah*, 527.

best explained by the preceding context's emphasis on resettling Jerusalem (14:11), which it reinforces by making clear that security is not only possible but certain due to the destruction of the enemy.

YHWH's counterattack against Jerusalem's enemies is a plague, which forms a literary inclusion around 14:12–15. These 'peoples' first suffer the effect of a plague corporally: their flesh, eyes, and mouths are ruined. Second, they are seized by a panic so extreme that they will attack one another, leaving Judah/Jerusalem to collect the spoil taken from her in 14:1 (apparently after Judah enters the combat, alongside Jerusalem, 14:14a).⁴⁴ The completeness of the destruction of Jerusalem's enemies is emphasized by the prediction that a similar plague will fall on all the animals in their camps (14:15), effectively leaving only material spoils for Jerusalem.⁴⁵

Against this backdrop of the complete destruction of Jerusalem's attackers appears a most unexpected group: 'survivors' from among those very same attackers. The identification of these ethnic non-Israelites as כְּלִינוֹתַי מִכָּל-הַגּוֹיִם is frustratingly vague: any reason for, and even any circumstance of, their survival is lacking. The problem of their characterization may be put even more acutely: the only description we have of them (at least prior to the time of 14:16) is their participation in the assault against Jerusalem (הַבָּאִים עַל-יְרוּשָׁלַיִם). How can YHWH's enemies become his worshippers?⁴⁶

Such a change is not without precedent in Zechariah. In 2:15[11] and 9:7, the integration of some of the nations (consistently defined as YHWH's and Zion's opponents) appears in the middle of sections that announce the nations' destruction or subjection. In Zechariah 2 the nations 'join themselves to YHWH' and in Zechariah 9 YHWH removes from Philistia all evidence of her objectionable religious practices, as we have seen. Here the new characterization of these survivors is delayed until their survival is predicated, but this is an issue of the order in which information is given, not an issue of coherence.⁴⁷

44 It is unclear whether the inhabitants of Jerusalem here are those who have not yet fled in 14:2, or those who fled (but presumably later returned) in 14:5.

45 Noted by Butterworth, *Structure*, 230.

46 The suggestion by Meyers and Meyers (*Zechariah 9–14*, 464) that "the suffering of the nations entitles them and predisposes them, no less than Israel, to the redemptive plan to be effected in the future age" lacks a basis in the passage and in Zechariah generally.

47 Note the similar silence of Isaiah 66 on why some from among the nations would come 'like a grain offering' to YHWH, or how they could serve as priests or Levites. See K.R. Schaeffer, "Zechariah 14: A Study in Allusion," *CBQ* 57 (1995): 66–91, esp. 83, for reflections on other parallels between 14:16 and Isa 66:23.

The celebration of Booths by non-Israelites (14:16; cf. Lev 23:33–36, 39–43; Deut 16:13–17) further clarifies the new characterization of some of the nations by having them commemorate an event organically related to Israel's exodus from Egypt.⁴⁸ While the lexical distinction between Israel and these survivors from the nations remains in place, participation in the Feast of Booths means that there is no longer any significant religious distinction between them.⁴⁹ The deliverance of the nations from YHWH's violence when he defended Jerusalem against them parallels restored Zion's return from exile as a second exodus, and both presume (particularly in the case of the nations) that YHWH overlooks or resolves the problem of their sin.⁵⁰

Just when it seems that thematic coherence is within our grasp, however, Zechariah presents another quandary, the possibility (purely rhetorical?) that some of these survivors would not worship YHWH at Jerusalem (14:17). At the linguistic level, the flexible modality of the Biblical Hebrew imperfect allows for this to be a merely theoretical possibility. Further, the statement in 14:16 that 'all' the survivors will worship YHWH seems to rule out the failure to do so on the part of some. But why then is so much attention (14:17–19) given to any and all surviving 'families of the earth' who refuse to recognize YHWH's kingship?

Part of the cognitive dissonance created by this section may be due to the expectation that as part of an eschatological denouement closely related to the Day of YHWH, divine intervention would leave no loose ends—yet the

48 The basis for the feast in the exodus is more relevant here than its connection to the harvest, which figures prominently in 14:17. Meyers and Meyers (*Zechariah* 9–14, 468–71) argue that Booths has a special significance in the post-exilic period, as attested by its title as simply 'the feast' (1 Kgs 8:1–2 // 2 Chron 5:3; Ezek 45:25; Num 29:12) and by the synchronicity between the second altar's dedication and the seventh month (Ezra 3:1–4), but the paltry realities of the Second Temple period make that an insufficient ground on which to suppose that the immense distance between Israel and the nations established by "covenant and Torah" could be overcome apart from a fairly radical reevaluation of the nations in the eschatological future.

49 Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah* 9–14, 463, note that the two other uses of the Nifal participle of יָתַר in Zechariah refer to Israelites (13:8; 14:2), and see participation as partial evidence for the "inversions and reversals" they see at work in chapter 14.

50 Here I take Booths not as metonymic for all feasts, but singled out among them as it is in Ezra 3:1–5, without excluding participation in the other feasts. B. Tidiman, *Le livre de Zacharie* (CEB 18; Vaux-sur-Seine: Edifac, 1996), 292, intriguingly notes that Booths "allowed the avoidance of the requirement of circumcision and other ritual provisions of the law on the part of proselyte pagans."

possible rebellion of some of the non-Israelite survivors is just such a loose end.⁵¹ Meyers and Meyers, like Boda, speak of the possibility of “residual resistance among the nations” in the new paradigm sketched in Zechariah 14.⁵² McComisky, for his part, argues that “the hypothetical allusion here envisions the end of all rebellion against God” and “underscores the prophet’s efforts to convey a sense of absoluteness.”⁵³

Uncertainty as to whether 14:17–19 is part of an absolutely final set of circumstances or not makes several different conclusions possible. Whether hypothetical or real, the text presents the possibility that some of those whom YHWH did not destroy while defending Jerusalem (‘families of the earth’ in 14:17; ‘Egypt’ in 14:18) would continue to resist his sovereignty over them. In such a case, they will be destroyed through the withholding of rain, which would negatively impact the harvests that are reflected in the feast itself and the well-being of these people, and/or plague (in the case of Egypt).⁵⁴

This agricultural facet is part of the chapter’s predominant emphasis on YHWH as the one who destroys those who resist him, and this lends plausibility to the idea that this drought and the resultant famine constitute judgment rather than restorative discipline. On the one hand, Mason suggests that these groups’ participation in the Feast of Booths “is a sign that they will seek the means of life, no longer from their idols, but from Yahweh. They will participate in all the blessings of the future salvation.”⁵⁵ Conversely, those who resist his sovereign claims will be punished and ultimately destroyed. Egypt may be singled out because of its unusual agricultural climate based on the

51 Hausmann surveys a number of different interpretations that attempt to make sense of this aspect, “Jerusalem und die Völker,” 394–95.

52 Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14*, 473; Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 528.

53 McComisky, “Zechariah,” 1242. Hausmann similarly refers to non-participation as a possibility, but later seems to understand it hypothetically, contributing to an “Ausdruck der Vergewisserung der definitive Entmachtung der feindlichen Kräfte” (“Jerusalem und die Völker,” 394, 396).

54 “The gift of rain was closely linked with the due observation of this feast.” R. Mason, “The Use of Earlier Biblical Material in Zechariah 9–14: A Study in Inner Biblical Exegesis: Zechariah 13:7–9,” in *Bringing out the Treasure: Inner Biblical Allusion in Zechariah 9–14* (ed. M.J. Boda and M.H. Floyd, with R. Mason; JSOTSup 370; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2003), 172–200 (192). It is easier to imagine this drought as judgment rather than correction, in part because of the drought’s description as a ‘plague’ in 14:18, which was fatal in the two other uses in Zechariah (14:12, 15).

55 Mason, “The Use,” 192.

Nile, because of the presence of an Israelite community there (Zech 10:10),⁵⁶ or because it “is a representative nation” (cf. Egypt’s mention alongside Edom in Joel 4).⁵⁷

One final crux remains: the ‘Canaanite/trader’ of 14:21. This section “describes the new Jerusalem crowded with pilgrims for the Feast of Succoth, and counterbalances the description of the attack on Jerusalem in vv. 1–3.”⁵⁸ At the end of a superlative description of the expansive holiness of Jerusalem and Judah that sees ‘Holy to Yahweh’ applied to everyone and everything in that area (even horses, which are ritually unclean in Pentateuchal legislation, cf. Lev 11:1–8) comes a final element: ‘there will no longer be a כְּנַעֲנִי in YHWH’s house on that day.’ There is no text-critical uncertainty as to the reading itself, so the ambiguity derives from the need to choose between two distinct senses for כְּנַעֲנִי, Canaanite or trader.⁵⁹ While the absence of (presumably corrupt) traders from the temple would not be insignificant, the parallels between both the formal and material aspects of the statement here and statements elsewhere in the Twelve (Joel 4:17; Nah 2:1[1:15]) and in Isaiah (Isa 52:1) that predict the absence of persons characterized as unacceptable (for cultic, religious, or moral reasons) from the temple or restored Jerusalem may favor the sense ‘Canaanite’ rather than ‘trader.’⁶⁰

I am inclined to agree with the suggestion of D.R. Jones that the anticipated absence of the ‘Canaanite’ does not eliminate ethnic non-Israelites, but rather

56 These two reasons are suggested by Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14*, 474.

57 M. Butterworth, *Structure*, 229. Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 528, understands another plague than drought coming against Egypt, since the Nile provided the main source of water for its agriculture (it too could be affected by drought, however).

58 K. Larkin, *The Eschatology of Second Zechariah: A Study of the Formation of a Mantological Wisdom Anthology* (CBET 6; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1994), 213.

59 *K-B*, 522.

60 Here I follow Schaefer, “Allusion,” 85–86. The probability that Zech 11:7, 11 both attest לְכַנְעֲנִי (cf. D. Barthélemy, *Critique textuelle de l’Ancien Testament* 4 vols.; OBO 50/1–4 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982–2005], 3:990, and A. Gelston, *The Twelve Minor Prophets* [BHQ 13; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2010], 144*) makes it possible that ‘traders’ there refers to “any Israelite leaders in positions of power or control over others” (Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9–14*, 262). That in turn raises the possibility that the absence of any ‘trader’ from the Temple refers to the absence of any who would be involved in harming YHWH’s metaphorical flock, regardless of that person’s ethnicity. This interpretative option at least provides a relatively clear characterization of the ‘trader’ that would explain why such a person could not be present in the Temple.

non-Yahwistic persons of all stripes, from the eschatological city-temple.⁶¹ Such a conclusion seems to be required by the fact that some from ‘all the nations’ come yearly to worship Yahweh in his house, and is corroborated by the emphasis on YHWH as the ‘only God’ in 14:9 and the absence of any purely racial or ethnic criterion as grounds for exclusion from YHWH-worship here and throughout Zechariah.

12.3 Analysis

The structure of Zechariah 14 and of the book as a whole, ending as it does on a note of reconciliation with the nations, underlines the importance of the nations-theme in general, and particularly its universalistic facet, for inter-relating the various sections of Zechariah.⁶²

12.3.1 *Lexical Overlap or Distinction*

A clear distinction between Israelites (Judah, Zion, etc.) and the nations is maintained almost everywhere in Zechariah. Exceptions are limited to the use of ‘remnant’ (יתר) language for some within both groups, the use of לעם for both non-Israelites and the restored exiles (2:15[11]; 8:8), and perhaps a non-ethnic sense for כנעני in 14:21.

12.3.2 *Semantic Overlap or Distinction*

A chronological distinction between the past and future in Zechariah appears consistently in its twofold characterization of the nations. Whereas in the past the nations have acted in exclusively culpable and aggressive ways, pursuing their own purposes at Judah’s expense, in the future this monochrome characterization will be modified. While some of the ‘nations’ continue as aggressors in many of the scenarios envisaged by Zechariah, in other cases some

61 D.R. Jones, *Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi* (Torch Bible Commentary; London: SCM Press, 1962), 180; Boda, *Haggai, Zechariah*, 529, concludes similarly. Canaanites are often mentioned in association with their religious practices; cf. Exod 34:11, etc. Meyers and Meyers (*Zechariah 9–14*, 470) introduce rather abruptly a distinction between these nations, whom they see as “the imperial powers that had dominated Israel,” and the “Canaanites,” but this seems impossible given the fact that they were apparently part of the group that YHWH partially destroyed in 14:3–5, 12–15.

62 Hausmann, “Jerusalem und die Völker,” 389. Among other things, he notes the corresponding discontinuity in the creation destroying and remaking imagery in chapter 14 in general and in the nations-theme in particular (“Jerusalem und die Völker,” 398).

among the 'nations' manifest an entirely new interest, that of joining Judah and approaching YHWH in submission and worship.

We note, first, that it is possible to correlate the identities of some of the nations and some of Judah in cases of punishment and deliverance alike. When deliverance is in view, this semantic overlap is reinforced on the lexical level by the shared use of 'remnant' (יתר) language for both. Similarly, when judgment is in view, some of both Judah and the nations groups (but not their remnants) undergo definitive judgment.

This dual bifurcation can be understood by noting that while Israel/Judah and the nations remain distinct entities, parts of each possess a key criterion of identity with parts of the other.⁶³ As a result, Judahites who come under judgment on the basis of that characterization and its prominence can be more readily compared with non-Israelites who share the same characterization and fate. Similarly, those in Yehud who heed Zechariah's call to repent and escape judgment are most readily compared with those among the nations who join that community and share the definitive good of having Yahweh among them.

Lacocque helpfully draws together a number of these lines of thought:

Israël, en tant que peuple de Dieu, élu, béni et source de bénédiction, doit faire place à une autre réalité transcendant les limites historiques et géographiques de la Nation. La ligne de démarcation passe maintenant au milieu du Peuple. Une moitié de la population est déportée, l'autre moitié 'ne sera pas retranchée de la Ville' (v. 2). De même, en ce qui concerne les Nations, leur destinée s'inscrit dans un double mouvement. Car elles seront vaincues et leurs mauvais desseins à l'égard de Jérusalem seront frustrés. Elles aussi connaîtront la catastrophe, et pour elles Jérusalem sera 'un calice d'étourdissement' (12,2), une pierre impossible à soulever (cf. 12,3). Mais pour elles aussi il y a un salut dans la célébration annuelle de la fête de Souccoth à Sion (14,16ss). De sorte qu'un sort commun attend ultimement Israël et les Nations dans l'abîme, et un lot commun est aussi réservé à l'un et aux autres au-delà de la mort.⁶⁴

63 By criterion of identity I mean a predicate of X that is identical to a predicate of Y and of sufficient significance to allow X to be thought of in some way as being Y. See A. Gibson, *Biblical Semantic Logic: A Preliminary Analysis* (2nd ed.; The Biblical Seminar 75; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 140–50, for a fuller explanation.

64 Lacocque, "Zacharie," 199.

Particularly important is his hermeneutical reflection on chapter 14 as a whole:

C'est que les catégories ont subi un profond changement. L'opposition, au lieu d'être entre Israël et les Nations, est maintenant entre le bien et le mal. . . . [C'est] les circonstances historiques qui obligent à distinguer, à l'intérieur du Peuple, entre ceux qui sont le Reste fidèle (cf. le יתר העם du v. 2) et ceux qui sont pour la déportation, comme les brebis du ch. 11 étaient pour la boucherie. Parallèlement, les Nations ne sont pas sous un jugement uniforme et destinées uniformément à l'anéantissement. Se condamnent elles-mêmes seulement celles qui ne montreront pas à Jérusalem pour y célébrer Souccoth. Car ici aussi, il y a un Reste rescapé (cf. le כל נותר מכל הגוים du v. 16).⁶⁵

12.4 Conclusions

Much as Zechariah's Yehudite audience is seen to undergo a bipartite division in the future, the non-Israelite nations will also be separated into two groups. Both Israel and the nations are divided on the basis of similar criteria, essentially their disposition toward YHWH and resulting behavior: either submission and obedience (cf. the calls to repentance in 1:3; 7:4–14; 8:16–17) or autonomy and rebellion. Zechariah likewise presents identical fates for two types of people regardless of their ethnic or national affiliation: those who submit to him enjoy his beneficent presence and inhabit his holy city, while those who refuse his authority are ultimately punished or destroyed. Throughout the book, the nations that come to YHWH do so in ways that presume the priority of Israel/Judah in that relationship. While some passages juxtapose these two identities of the nations and so present a complex, often tenuous coherence, the theme as a whole exhibits appreciable coherence across the book. Zech 14:17–19 is perhaps the most puzzling passage, especially in terms of its temporal setting, but the semantics of the theme there are still essentially identical to those elsewhere in the book.

In Zechariah, the existence of another Israel, created in organic continuity with the historical community that Zechariah addresses, is part of a larger narrative that also gives rise to the redefinition of some of the nations. When all is said and done, some who were Israel's enemies, whether long ago or as recently as the final attack on Jerusalem, have not merely been reconciled with

65 Lacocque, "Zacharie," 199–200.

Israel, but have become part of her. Zechariah's placement between Haggai and Malachi thus finds it in the context of books whose approaches to the nations are quite similar, although not identical. Zechariah shares with Haggai the vision of the nations being divided into those who submit to YHWH and those who do not, while it shares with Malachi a similar distinction within the nations as well as the corresponding division within Israel.

The Nations in Malachi

The final book of the Twelve, although focused on Yehud and its problems, does not lose sight of its global context. Further, while Malachi gives little place to the nations in terms of text, the nations intersect the book's primary themes in ways that attest their significance.

13.1 Terminology

The nations appear under a variety of terms in Malachi. Despite the suggestive future distinction (argued for below) between the nations and Edom on the one hand, and between the righteous and wicked in Israel on the other, Yehudite and non-Yehudite groups are never united as far as their lexical labels are concerned by a phrase like 'the whole world' or 'all flesh.'

13.1.1 *Edom-Language*

Language for Edom in Malachi includes עשו ('Esau,' 1:2, 3), עדום ('Edom,' 1:4–5), and two titles for Edom connected with YHWH's judgment of it: גבול רשעה ('wicked territory,' 1:4) and העם אשר-זעם יהוה עד-עולם ('the people against whom YHWH is indignant forever,' 1:4). This language appears only in the first disputation (1:2–5), and the rest of the book makes no further mention of Edom.

13.1.2 *עם-Language*

This terminology appears in Malachi only once, with reference to Edom, in 1:4 (העם אשר-זעם יהוה עד-עולם; the use in 2:9 refers to the Yehudites). This term, at least here if not in general, stresses not the socio-political aspects of the nation of Edom, but rather the kinship of the group irrespective of the degree of political organization.¹ This word choice (עם rather than גוי) also allows

¹ On this sense for עם, see A. Meinhold, *Maleachi* (BKAT 14/8; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 2006), 53; A. Cody, "When is the Chosen People Called a gôy?," VT 14 (1964): 1–6. Meinhold states: "Den von den beiden hauptsächlichen Wörtern für 'Volk' im Alten Testament, 'am' (עם) und gôj (גוי), deren Bedeutungsunterschied darin liegt, daß 'am' ein Volk im Hinblick auf die verwandtschaftlich gemeinte Zusammengehörigkeit bezeichnet, während gôj die politisch-reale Verfassung im Land bedeutet ... wird für Edom העם verwendet."

the reader of Malachi to distinguish Edom from the group of ‘all the nations’ (כל־הגוים, 3:12), which are never referred to with עם.

13.1.3 גוי-Language

In contrast to עם-language, גוי-language in Malachi appears frequently and in very significant contexts outside the first disputation, and so merits separate treatment. The plural גוים (and never the singular form) is used exclusively of non-Israelites groups, and is clustered mainly in 1:11 and 1:14.² The promise to repentant Israel (3:10) that because of the fecundity of their land “all the nations will call you blessed” (3:12) is the only use of כל־הגוים in Malachi, although the fact that כל־הגוים is coextensive (if not coreferential) with “from the rising to the setting of the sun” makes it quite plausible to see the latter phrase (1:11) as inclusive of all nations except Edom, which has been relegated to effective non-existence in 1:4. In all these cases the plural is used, denoting the continuous existence of a number of socio-political entities outside Yehud. The singular form is used only once, of the returned Yehudite community, in 3:9, although some suggest that the phrase כלו הגוי there is secondary.

13.1.4 Geographical Language

Several phrases refer to the whole world (‘from the rising of the sun to its setting,’ ‘every place,’ 1:11) or to (some of) the world outside Israel (מעל לגבול, 1:5) as the milieu of the nations. There is also one reference to Edom’s territory (גבול, 1:4). However, apart from the judgment of Edom in chapter 1, Malachi is almost entirely focused on the wicked and the righteous, both of whom are present in Malachi’s audience. The two appearances of ארץ (3:12, 24) almost certainly denote the returned community’s territory. It is not possible to determine with confidence whether Malachi conceives of this ארץ as coextensive with the Persian province of Yehud or as the larger territory traditionally associated with Israel/Judah under the divided or united monarchy. There is a slight probability that the הרם that is analogous to the Day of Yahweh in Malachi may extend to the whole world (Mal 3:24), but most exegetes favor a more limited sense.³

13.1.5 Other Language

The mention of a ‘foreign’ (נכר) god in 2:11 is part of a condemnation of marriage by Yehudite men of women (presumably non-Israelite in ethnic terms)

² As noted above, the singular גוי is used once, in 3:9, to identify Israel as a socio-political entity.

³ P. Verhoef, *The Books of Haggai and Malachi* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 344, and A.E. Hill, *Malachi* (AB 25D; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 381, favor a more limited sense.

who continued to worship their chosen god(s) rather than YHWH (cf. Num 21:29; Deut 32:19).⁴ Notably, foreignness is expressed here in religious terms with regard to the woman (who was and remains religiously 'other'), while the ethnically Yehudite man, along with his entire line, is to be eliminated from Israel (Hifil of כרת).⁵ This penalty has a uniquely theological focus for two related reasons: such sins are against YHWH, and are punished directly by him.⁶ The irrelevance of Israelite ethnicity to this penalty is noteworthy.

13.2 Israel in Malachi

Before we take up the characterization and fates of the nations in Malachi, the prominence of Israel in the book, and the fact that every appearance of the nations-theme squarely intersects it, require that we sketch the main lines of that theme first. This is all the more true in light of the strong individualization expressed in 3:13–4:3, which discusses eschatology not in terms of the returned community as a whole but in terms of individual persons' internal religious disposition and behavior.⁷

In Malachi, the whole community of Israel past (cf. 3:22) and present is referred to as Israel (1:1, 5; 2:11, 16), Judah (2:11; 3:4), Jacob (2:12; cf. 1:2), the descendants of Jacob (3:6), and once as a 'nation' (3:9) and a 'people' (2:9).⁸ While these varied terms are all used of Malachi's one audience, that audience

4 So Hill, *Malachi*, 231–33; Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, 269–70. Meinhold, *Maleachi*, 208, states: "Deutlich aber ist, daß [die "Töchtern"] einem anderen Zugehörigkeits- und Verehrungsverhältnis als die Judäerinnen und Judäer, die all JHWH zum Vater haben, eingefügt ist. Da bedeutet, daß die Tochter eines 'fremden Gottes' ... keineswegs selbst Göttin zu sein braucht oder sein wird. ... Gemeint wird vielmehr eine Frau sein, die trotz Heirat mit einem Judäer nicht von ihrer Bindung an einen anderen Gott abläßt (Gegenbeispiel: Ruth). Damit erfüllt sie den Tatbestand der Idolatrie und stellt zugleich eine ständige Gefahr in dieser Hinsicht dar."

5 J. Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16* (AB 3; New York: Doubleday, 1991), 459.

6 Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 457.

7 On this phenomenon with respect to 'Israel' in particular, see E. Ben Zvi, "Inclusion in and Exclusion from Israel as Conveyed by the Use of the Term 'Israel' in Post-Monarchic Biblical Texts," in *The Pitcher is Broken: Memorial Essays for Gösta W. Ahlström* (ed. S. Holloway and L. Handy; JSOTSup 190; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 95–149; S.S. Scatolini Apóstolo, "On the Elusiveness and Malleability of 'Israel,'" *JHS* 6 (2006): article 7.

8 Cf. Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, 190. Hill, *Malachi*, 319, thinks יג is used for Yehud in 3:9 "because religiously and socially they were indistinguishable from the surrounding nations," which are referred to as גוים.

is not wholly continuous with respect to the future the book foresees, since the book announces that at some point in the future, Israel will be purified through the removal of all the ‘wicked’ despite the fact that on many grounds (ethnic, linguistic, etc.) these persons could be reckoned as Israelites/Yehudites.⁹

Malachi thus refers both to all Yehudites as a unified group, and to a subgroup of them who ‘revere Yahweh’ (3:16; note similar inner-Yehudite distinctions in 1:14; 2:5; 3:5, 16, 20, 23, 25).¹⁰ In this connection 2:11–12 is especially significant, since it expresses the wish that those Yehudites who marry (non-Yehudite?) women associated with other gods (אל נכר, used elsewhere only in Deut 32:12; Ps 81:10; cf. also Jer 8:18) would be exterminated from Israel on the basis of their mixed religious commitment.¹¹ The portrayal of some Yehudites in terms redolent of the original constitution of Israel at Sinai is also significant in Malachi. This subgroup, identical in that context to those who revere YHWH, will be his ‘special treasure’ (סגולה in 3:17; cf. Exod 19:5) in the Day of YHWH, to the exclusion of their fellow returnees. This distinction will expose “the difference between the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God and the one who does not serve him” (3:18).¹² The use of moral

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- 9 As noted above, the writing prophets frequently single out religious features to identify a subgroup within a larger group that is ethnically unified. This holds true whether one makes religion part of ethnicity or not. For a brief consideration of the relation of religion to ethnicity, see C. Enloe, “Religion and Ethnicity,” in *Ethnic Diversity and Conflict in Europe* (ed. P. Sugar; Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1980), 356–60, and consider the arguments of S.J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999) and K.L. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1998) for the development of a separation between national and religious identity in the second and tenth centuries BCE, respectively.
- 10 See K. Koenen, *Heil den Gerechten—Unheil den Sündern! Ein Beitrag zur Theologie der Prophetenbücher* (BZAW 229; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 52–67, esp. 58–67, where he argues that various redactional levels in Malachi envision different objects, degrees, or ways of judgment.
- 11 The assertion of Y. Hoffman, “The Concept of ‘Other Gods’ in the Deuteronomistic Literature,” in *Politics and Theopolitics in the Bible and Postbiblical Literature* (ed. H.G. Reventlow, Y. Hoffman, and B. Uffenheimer; JSOTSup 171; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 66–84 (70), that the similar phrase אלֹהֵי נֹכַר “although reflecting some idea of otherness, does not certify that these deities were considered an utterly different essence from the God of Israel” seems undermined by the frequent use of ‘abandon’ (עָזַב), ‘be unfaithful’ (זָנָה), and other language of exclusive relationship that appears in the passages he cites (e.g., Deut 31:16; 32:12; Josh 24:20, 23).
- 12 I agree with A. Scharf, “Das Zwölfprophetenbuch als redaktionelle Großeinheit,” *TLZ* 133 (2008): 227–46 (242), who argues that here “Innerhalb des Gottesvolkes waren Gerechte

and covenantal criteria to make distinctions within the returned community in Yehud also appears in the impressive description of the Day of YHWH that closes the book's main section and foresees the destruction of the 'arrogant' and 'evildoer' within Yehud (3:21).¹³

13.3 Characteristics of the Nations

13.3.1 *Edom Punished (1:2–5)*

We turn now to the nations, beginning with the one that figures prominently in the book's first dispute. Edom enters Malachi's discourse early on as proof of Yahweh's contention that he loves Israel. As is often the case in Malachi, Israel challenges this assertion, not recognizing his love for her. YHWH responds to this doubt by arguing that the proof of his love for Israel is found in her election, which is expressed in terms of YHWH's sovereign discrimination between Jacob and Esau (Gen 25:23).¹⁴ The covenantal basis for this distinction dictates

und Frevler unterschieden, die im Endgericht jeweils ihre gerechte Vergeltung erwarten dürfen."

- 13 The inner-Israelite context of 3:18 is also noted by S.D. Snymen, "Eschatology in the book of Malachi," *OTE 1 NS* (1988): 63–77 (70). G. Harvey is thus correct when he concludes that in some places in the HB/OT, Israel "refers to a mixed community" that is "not a 'pure' community of YHWH worshippers [but] comprises 'good' and 'bad', 'worshippers' and 'rebels'.... The real Israel is not a 'pure Israel.'" *The True Israel: Uses of the Names Jew, Hebrew and Israel in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (AGJU 35; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 187.
- 14 This locates YHWH's choice of Israel first of all not in the Sinai covenant or in the exodus which preceded it, but in the sovereign divine choice of Jacob before he had done good or bad, a status that connects him to the promises made to Abraham. A. Mühling identifies three typical functions of references to Abraham in Genesis: "1. Die Identifizierung JHWHs als Gott der Erzväter; 2. Abraham als Verheissungsträger sowie 3. Die Erzväter als Vorfahren des Volkes." Mühling, "*Blickt auf Abraham, euren Vater*": *Abraham als Identifikationsfigur des Judentums in der Zeit des Exils und des Zweiten Tempels* (FRLANT 236; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 79. The use here probably falls under the category of "Abraham als der Stammvater Israels: Der exklusivistisch-partikularistische Zug" (355–56), which she finds first in Deutero-Isaiah (Isa 51:2). It is interesting that Mühling sees in these types of references an image of Abraham as "Stammvater *Gesamtisraels* bzw. *aller Juden*" (355). J.J. Krause highlights the importance of election in Malachi's description of Edom over against the importance of moral misbehavior in Obadiah's treatment of Edom, although his conclusion that these constitute two separate traditions is possible but not inevitable; "Tradition, History, and Our Story: Some Observations on Jacob and Esau in the Books of Obadiah and Malachi," *JSOT* 32 (2008): 475–86.

that the love/hate language used of Jacob and Esau here be viewed in terms of covenantal association more than in terms of emotion.¹⁵

As in other biblical books in which Israel's identity is strongly covenantal, especially Deuteronomy and Hosea (Deut 4:32–34; 7:6–8; 10:14, 15; 23:5; Hos 3:1; 11:8, 9; 14:5), 'hate' indicates covenantal non-status, or outsider status, more than active antipathy.¹⁶ Widespread use of this idiom across the ancient Near East with such a sense confirms this. For example, an Amarna Letter (EA 286:18–20) from Abdiheba of Jerusalem to the Pharaoh has Abdiheba ask, "Why do you love the 'Apiru and hate the (loyal) governors?," implying that "the Pharaoh should have loved those with whom he had a treaty and hated the 'Apiru with whom he had no such relationship."¹⁷

However, the shift in Mal 1:2–5 from Esau's covenantal non-elect status to Edom's being the subject of YHWH's aggression complicates this understanding. Particularly helpful at this point is J.S. Kaminsky's division of those who are not elect in the HB into two categories: the simply "non-elect," who "were always considered fully part of the divine economy," and the "anti-elect, who "are deemed to be enemies of God and whom Israel is commanded to annihilate."¹⁸ This distinction, and the feasibility of seeing Esau as non-elect while Edom eventually came to hold anti-elect status, is valid in Malachi 1 even though Malachi cites no explicit crime which YHWH would punish as he does. To the question, why would YHWH destroy the mountain that was Esau's rightful inheritance (יְרֵשָׁה, Deut 2:5) as a result of his covenantal hatred for Esau, a reader of the Twelve (or of other portions of the HB/OT) could well reply that Edom's history prior to the return of the community from exile in Persia was more than sufficient justification. Hill summarizes the biblical data thus: "Esau symbolized all those who in their arrogance and independence rejected the tokens of Yahweh's covenant and despised Israel as Yahweh's elect (cf. Gen 25:29–34; 26:34–35)."¹⁹

15 D. Stuart, "Malachi," in *Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi* (vol. 3. of *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*; ed. T.M. McComiskey; 3 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 1245–1396 (1284); S.L. McKenzie and H.N. Wallace, "Covenant Themes in Malachi," *CBQ* 45 (1983): 549–63 (555).

16 J. Tigay, *Deuteronomy* (JPS Commentary; Philadelphia: JPS, 1996), 67, 77.

17 McKenzie and Wallace, "Covenant Themes in Malachi," 556.

18 J.S. Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Doctrine of Election* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 107–36 (here 109).

19 Hill, *Malachi*, 149, with reference to Obadiah; Joel 4:19[3:19]; Amos 1:11, cf. 1:6, 9; Num 20:14–21; 24:18–19; see further B.A. Anderson, *Brotherhood and Inheritance: A Canonical Reading of the Esau and Edom Traditions* (LHBOTS 556; London: T & T Clark, 2011).

The *waw*-imperfect-consecutive verbal syntax in 1:3b means that some destruction of Edom had come about at the time of that text's composition, while 1:4 implies that Edom has not yet been completely destroyed. Several options exist for both phases of destruction (cf. also Obadiah), ranging from Edom's fall to Babylon shortly after 587 to the complete destruction of Edom's capitol city as attested by "inscriptional evidence indicates that the Nabateans had overrun the region of Edom, making Petra their capital city."²⁰ Whichever date is chosen for the past and future destruction of Edom, it is difficult to date this passage later than the late fourth century, or its author would have had no rationale for insisting that Edom would be destroyed, and no significant grounds for seeing a continued Edomite presence that would express the intention to rebuild.²¹

Although Edom is described in particular, historical terms rather than in mythological language, it is still conceivable that the author of Mal 1:2–5 would attribute to it a role distinct from all other nations, as Habakkuk does with Babylon and as Nahum does with Assyria. Several facets of its identity that are not predicated of the other nations in Malachi favor such a unique status for Edom here. These elements also shed light on the transition from the comparatively harmless immediate consequences of the covenantal non-elect status for Esau (note his reconciliation with Jacob in Genesis 33) to much more serious pronouncements against Edom.²² First, the contrast 'they . . . I' sets YHWH over against Edom in a binary polarization (cf. the first-person opposition of

20 Hill, *Malachi*, 151. Josephus dates Edom's fall to Babylon to 582, *Ant* 10.9.7 (180–82) although the gradual infiltration of Edom by the Nabateans or some other Arab semi-nomadic group or groups took place somewhat later.

21 So, similarly, J. Wöhrle, *Der Abschluss des Zwölfprophetenbuchs: Buchübergreifende Redaktionprozesse in den späten Sammlungen* (BZAW 389; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 262, who argues that "Dieses Edom-Wort könnte nach den bereits vorgestellten Überlegungen zur Geschichte Edoms in der nachexilischen Zeit gut in der frühe hellenistische Zeit gehören. Denn von Joel 4,19 und dem Obadjabuch her konnte wahrscheinlich gemacht werden, dass es zu dieser Zeit erneut zu Übergriffen der Edomiter auf jüdisches Gebiet kam."

22 Pace Wöhrle, *Abschluss*, 219–20, who thinks that "das eigentliche Thema dieses Wortes, die Liebe JHWHs zu seinem Volk, in den Versen 1,4–5 verlassen wird." He argues from the unique focus of 1:4–5 (but it is not necessary to exclude 1:2–3 for that reason), the variation from Esau (1:2–3) to Edom (1:4–5), and the unique messenger-formula in 1:4 that 1:4–5 are secondary (220–21). He also judges 2:11, 16; 3:22 to be secondary (221). Meinhold (*Maleachi*, 51) argues more plausibly that in this case 1:4 does not function as a messenger formula "sondern nach Art einer Proklamationsformel." See the defense of the unity of 1:2–5 by R. Kessler, "The Unity of Malachi and Its Relation to the Book of the Twelve," in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve. Methodological Foundations—*

YHWH to Nineveh, Nah 2:14; 3:5). Second, this opposition involves YHWH's commitment to undo whatever Edom undertakes in an attempt to continue its continued existence. Third, this opposition is rooted in divine justice, and Edom's identity is connected with wickedness (רשעה) and divine wrath (זעם), elements that Malachi does not connect with any other non-Israelite nation.²³ This terminology leaves no doubt that YHWH's actions against Edom are and will be motivated by the direct, divine application of justice and punishment for sin even if no explicit offense is noted by the text.²⁴

The result of YHWH's prolonged anger against Edom is the wish or result that Yahweh be 'great outside her borders.'²⁵ This greatness may echo (and so contradict) Persian royal self-adulation,²⁶ but its primary reference must be sought in the HB.²⁷ The frequent connection between God's great name and his acts on Israel's behalf makes it possible to presume some ongoing

Redactional Processes—Historical Insights (ed. R. Albertz, J. Nogalski, and J. Wöhrle; BZAW 433; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 223–36, esp. 227–30.

- 23 Meinhold suggests (*Maleachi*, 52) that "Es hat den Anschein, als ob Mal 1,2–5 den Abstraktbegriff Frevelhaftig- und Gottwidrigkeit für Edom nachliefert und damit ein begriffliches Resümee zu ziehen versucht." Note the connections of זעם with righteousness-language (Ps 7:11), personal acknowledgement of sin (Ps 38:4), national sin (Lam 2:6), etc.
- 24 R. Vuilleumier obscures the Esau-Edom difference by asserting of the coming judgment against Edom that "La méchanceté est non la raison, mais l'effet du choix de Dieu." Vuilleumier, "Malachie," in *Aggée, Zacharie, Malachie* (S. Amsler, A. Lacocque, and R. Vuilleumier; CAT 111; Neuchâtel: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1981), 217–56 (226).
- 25 Some suggest that the verb-first imperfect without a *waw*-conjunction is best taken as jussive, e.g., C.H.J. van der Merwe, J.A. Naudé, and J.H. Kroeze, *A Biblical Hebrew Reference Grammar* (Biblical Languages 3; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2000), 154. While גבול can mean either 'territory' or 'border,' either sense gives the same meaning here; cf. Harvey, *True Israel*, 183.
- 26 "Royal Achaemenid titles such as: great king, king of kings, king of all countries, king of the world, king in this great earth far and wide, king of the multitude, and king of countries containing all kinds of men, emphasize the enormity of the realm." E. Ehrenberg, "Dieu et mon droit: kingship in Late Babylonian and Early Persian times," in *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond* (ed. N. Brisch; Oriental Institute Seminars 4; Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2008), 103–31 (104). Under Xerxes the link between reverence for the god and fidelity to the king came to mean that the king played a critical role in the successful passage of ordinary Persians into the afterlife: "only through fidelity to the Persian monarch and the order he represents can the individual be saved." A. Kuhrt, "Persia, Persians," *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books* (ed. B.T. Arnold and H.G.M. Williamson; Leicester: InterVarsity, 2005), 768–82 (776).
- 27 For arguments to this effect see especially S. Talmon, "The 'Comparative Method' in Biblical Interpretation—Principles and Problems," in *Congress Volume: Göttingen, 1977*

antipathy between Israel and Edom when this section was composed, although it is impossible to be certain of which event(s) might be in view.²⁸ If יגדל is understood as a jussive form, one might infer that YHWH's judgment against Edom prompts Israel to wish for additional divine judgments against Edom or other entities in the future. In this case, it would have in view a more definitive destruction of Edom, or of other nations characterized as 'evil.' However, the other 'nations' in Malachi are not described with רשע-language, although some in Israel are (Mal 3:15, 18, 19, 21; these are the only other uses of such language in the book). Moreover, the emphasis in 1:5a is on the judgment that will already have fallen upon Edom (ועיניכם תראינה). These points favor taking יגדל as a simple imperfect, with the result that its sense is resultative here, focusing on the effects of YHWH's intervention outside Israel's borders.

13.3.2 *The Nations Worship YHWH Acceptably (1:6–14)*

The whole of 1:6–2:9 critiques the returned Yehudite community's cult for being corrupt and perfunctory. This cultic activity ironically dishonors Yahweh's 'name,' which forms an inclusion around 1:6–14, and the concentration of nations-language in the second disputation's first half allows us to restrict our focus to that section.²⁹ The disputation begins with the divine assertion that YHWH receives no honor or respect from the Yehudite priests in his capacities as their Father and Master; rather, the priests despise his name (1:6a). This accusation is met with an insolent question from the accused priests, who reject the charge that they have despised his name (1:6b). YHWH's retort is precise: the priests have offered defiled food on the altar, willfully ignoring cultic regulations concerning animals suitable for sacrifice.

Exceptionally, the priests reject this accusation as well, and so YHWH adds a rejoinder that focuses on the attitude behind the profane cultic practice: they find YHWH's 'table' despicable.³⁰ No reason is given for this attitude, which might have been due to the relatively modest Second Temple in comparison with the First Temple or to comparison with cults embraced elsewhere in the Persian empire. The root of the problem seems to lie, however, in a failure to

(ed. J.A. Emerton; VTSup 29; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 320–56; W.W. Hallo "Ancient Near Eastern Texts and Their Relevance for Biblical Exegesis", in *COS* 1.xxiii–xxviii.

28 See Josh 7:9; 1 Sam 12:22; 2 Sam 7:26 // 1 Chron 17:24; 1 Kgs 8:42 // 2 Chron 6:32; Ps 76:1; 99:3; Jer 10:6; 44:26; Ezek 36:23.

29 This bipartite structure is widely recognized, e.g., Wöhrle, *Der Abschluss*, 222.

30 Ezek 44:16 uses 'table' to refer to the altar of burnt offering, as here. While Malachi could be indebted to Ezekiel at this point, the general understanding of food-items being presented to YHWH would suffice for the metaphorical sense.

appreciate who YHWH is in relation to Israel, specifically as father and master (1:6). This failure leads the priests in view (and to a lesser extent others, 1:14) to reckon YHWH's altar despicable, bringing blind, lame, and sick sacrificial animals, actions that are twice said to be 'evil' (רע) in 1:8a.³¹

YHWH then attacks the attitude which allows them to treat his cult in this way by sarcastically suggesting that they exhibit such carelessness with the Persian governor. This hypothetical scenario is followed by two rhetorical questions which affirm that the governor (and how much more YHWH) would neither be pleased with nor accept such careless contributions.³² This rejection of the Yehudite cult as currently practiced develops into a forceful rejection of those offering it. 1:9a is probably a sarcastic command to the priests to entreat God's favor in order that YHWH would be 'gracious' to them (the imperative makes an interrogative tenor impossible).³³ Given the situation that Malachi describes, it is inevitable that such an effort apart from repentance (cf. 3:10–12) would constitute a blithe expectation of divine indulgence, and the book thus insists in YHWH's name that he will not 'receive' them (פנה with נשא).

These points are drawn together in 1:10 with a divine wish that the Yehud cult as currently practiced would be stopped and twin assertions that YHWH is not pleased with the Yehudites or with their offering.³⁴ In view of 1:11, this call for the end or interruption of the Yehudite cult creates a rhetorical space in

31 It is not clear from **בזוי שמי הכהנים** in 1:6 whether this condemnation has in view all the priests or only some of them.

32 Meinhold, *Maleachi*, 120, sees especially Exod 34:6ff. in view here due to the use of **חנן, אל**. While this is possible, it is at least equally plausible that some of this language echoes the priestly benediction of Num 6:23–27, or perhaps its larger context. Both passages share a focus on the priests, the verb **חנן**, emphasis on God's **פנה**, the concept of divine acceptance with **נשא פנה**, a focus on blessing (positively in Numbers 6; negatively in Malachi, cf. Mal 2:2), and an emphasis on the relationship between Israel and the divine **שם**. It is also possible that various concepts of the Sinai pericope are in view without the author or redactor of the second disputation having intended to evoke the echo of a particular text.

33 The collocation of **חלה** with YHWH's **פנה** as its object with three or fewer intervening words occurs in Exod 32:11; 1 Sam 13:12; 1 Kgs 13:6; 2 Kgs 13:4; 2 Chron 33:12; Ps 119:58; Jer 26:19; Dan 9:13; Zech 7:2; 8:21, 22. When Israel or Israelites are the subject of the verb, their situation is often one of distress brought on by disobedience, but this is a connotation, not a denotation. T. Fretheim, "חנן," *NIDOTTE* 2:203–206 (205), sees divine grace as exceptionally extended to those who don't repent (Neh 9:17, 31), or whose repentance is questionable (Gen 33:5, 11). On Malachi's view, however, unrepentant Israel has no right to expect it.

34 So also Meinhold, *Maleachi*, 121–22; in light of Israel's lack of concern for the cult, "deshalb bleiben diese Opfer ohne Ergebnis.... Letztlich sind solche Opfer ihrem Empfänger inadäquat... Und ausschliesslich deshalb sollten sie nicht fortdauern."

which another cult could exist, since the idea of YHWH not being worshipped by anyone, anywhere is not tenable (cf. the rhetoric of 1:6).³⁵

Against this unparalleled background YHWH foresees an acceptable cult arising among the nations in 1:11. It is hard to imagine a sharper contrast between the fates of the Yehudites and non-Israelite nations than the one created by the assertion here that everywhere ‘among the nations’ God’s name will be great not due to his judgment against them (contrast 1:5), but due to their acceptable worship of him. This is even more striking in the context of the second disputation, where God refuses to accept Israel’s sacrifices (1:10) and instead receives ‘incense’ and a ‘pure grain offering’ from the nations *where they are* (‘from the rising to the setting of the sun’).³⁶

These ‘pure’ Gentile offerings contrast with the flawed sacrifices that the Israelites were bringing. A ‘pure’ offering meets the requirements of the law (Leviticus 11; Deut 14:3–19) as to the offering itself, the one offering it, and the circumstances of the offering.³⁷ As for the site of the offering, the phrase ‘from the rising of the sun to its setting’ should be taken geographically rather than chronologically since the following parallel phrase is locative, not chronological.³⁸ This makes clear that YHWH foresees acceptable worship being offered to him across the globe, not only from Jerusalem. This simultaneous diminution of the importance of Israelite identity and of the province of Yehud with its temple was surely stunning to Malachi’s audience.

As suggested earlier, ‘My name (will be) great’ may echo and undermine Persian royal self-adulation, but its primary reference is intertextual within the HB.³⁹ All relevant biblical contexts, some quite explicitly, conceive of YHWH’s name, and thus of YHWH, as unique and incompatible with syncretism or polytheism (e.g., Josh 7:9 clearly opposes YHWH to the gods of Canaan, cf.

35 I fail to see why in A. Viberg’s opinion YHWH’s turning from Judah’s cult to the nations’ cult lacks any “logical relationship” with the “condemnation of the priestly cult of Jerusalem;” see his “Wakening a Sleeping Metaphor: A New Interpretation of Malachi 1:11,” *TynBul* 45 (1994): 297–319 (306 n. 22).

36 While many have suggested that this means Yahweh accepts worship offered to a generic ‘high god,’ Baldwin points out that the OT prohibits such a view, and it would vitiate Malachi’s own prohibition of marriage with non-Yahwists (2:11). See J. Baldwin, “Malachi 1:11 and the Worship of the Nations in the OT,” *TynBul* 23 (1972): 117–24 (121).

37 Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, 225.

38 Noted by Viberg, “Wakening,” 301.

39 Cf. I. Himbaza, “‘YHWH *Seba’ot* devient le grand roi’: Une interprétation de Ml 1,6–14 à la lumière du contexte perse,” *VT* 62 (2012): 357–68, and G. Goswell, “The Eschatology of Malachi after Zechariah 14,” *JBL* 132 (2013): 625–38.

Rahab's words in Josh 2:9–11; in Jer 44:25–26 God insists that his name will not be misused by those who worship 'the queen of heaven').⁴⁰

The contrastive וְאֵת that begins 1:12 once again contrasts the Yehudites who bring flawed offerings with those among the nations who will do the contrary. Many of the accusations of 1:6–10 are repeated here, although 1:13 adds that the priests found divine service tiresome and that some of the offerings were stolen (presumably so that the one offering it made no financial expenditure). 1:14 states that some would even vow to YHWH the male (an appropriate sacrifice) only to change their mind later; the fact that the 'crafty' person is in view here makes it clear that the vow was not well-intentioned.

In yet another contrast to such flawed worship in Yehud, Yahweh's name will be revered by the nations (1:14, Nif יִרָא). The contrast between the flawed cult that some Yehudite priests are currently bringing and the alternative scenario among the nations echoes the central contrast in 1:10, 11, so a future tense translation is justified in this verbless clause.⁴¹ The reason for the curse against the one who commits to bringing a suitable offering but does not finally do so is that YHWH 'is a great king.'

Here again, the emphasis on YHWH's name is strong evidence against equating well-intentioned worship of other gods, or of the 'god of heaven,' with Yahwism. This same emphasis is amplified by the parallel structure which spans 1:6–14. It is especially notable that the acceptable Gentile cult is the final element in both halves of the passage. The only element omitted in the second

40 In all uses of verbal and nominal forms of גדל with שם separated by two words or less in the Hebrew Bible, regardless of order, God's name is great due to his great acts on Israel's behalf, whether the exodus or more generally for Israel, Josh 7:9; 2 Sam 7:26 // 1 Chron 17:24 (the dynastic covenant with David); 1 Kgs 8:42 // 2 Chron 6:32; Ps 76:1 (connects YHWH's great name to knowing YHWH); Ps 99:3; Jer 10:6 (adds YHWH's incomparability); Jer 44:26 (adds as a correlate the rejection of syncretism and polytheism); 1 Sam 12:22 (connected with covenant fidelity); Ezek 36:23 (used in parallel with YHWH's holiness).

41 The verbless clause here in 1:11 differs from the usual word order for such clauses, which is subject-predicate, as in 1:14. Cf. R. Buth, "Word Order in the Verbless Clause: A Generative-Functional Approach," in *The Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew: Linguistic Approaches* (ed. C.L. Miller; Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 1; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 79–108 (107). At present, our knowledge of verbless clauses will not resolve the question of the chronological tense of these phrases. This includes C.L. Miller's observation that כִּי typically precedes "a relatively less-definite constituent and a relatively more-definite constituent, that is, the word-order 'new-given.'" Miller, "The Verbless Clause and Its Textual Function," in C.L. Miller (ed.), *The Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew: Linguistic Approaches* (Linguistic Studies in Ancient West Semitic 1; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 321–36 (332), summarizing D. Michel, "Probleme der Nominalsatzes im biblischen Hebräisch," *ZAH* 7 (1994): 215–24.

half of this parallel structure is the wish that Judah's cult would end, which may be due to the curse in C'.

- A 1:7, YHWH's altar despised
- B 1:8, blind, lame, sick sacrifices
- C 1:9, YHWH will receive no such sacrifices
- D 1:10, YHWH's wish that Yehud's corrupt cult would end
- E 1:11, YHWH's name great among the nations
- A' 1:12, YHWH's altar defiled, its food despised
- B' 1:13, robbed, sick, lame offerings
- C' 1:14a, divine curse against the one bringing flawed sacrifices
(—)
- E' 1:14b, YHWH's name revered among the nations

At this point it will be useful to summarize the arguments in favor of seeing the scenario envisaged by 1:11, 14 as not a present reality in which non-Israelites who have never heard of YHWH are already offering acceptable worship, but as an anticipated future scenario.⁴²

First, the arguably future setting of this circumstance has already been hinted at by the wish that Judah would cease her flawed sacrifices.⁴³ Not only is a wish inherently prospective, but the verbal syntax of the passage reflects such a distinction. The material describing Judah's cult speaks of present realities with participles (1:6b; 1:7a), perfect verbs (1:6, 7 'says/say'; 1:6, 7 'despise'), converted imperfect verbs (1:8a,b), and infinitive forms (1:7b), while wishes for it to end (i.e., in the future) use simple imperfective forms (1:10, *bis*). The material dealing with the nations uses only participles or verbless clauses and so leaves the tense unspecified, but when seen in contrast with the need for *future* radical reform to Judah's *present* cult it can be taken as future as well.⁴⁴ It is also

42 See also the arguments to the same effect in Goswell, "The Eschatology of Malachi after Zechariah 14," who adds to these the insistence in Zech 14:9 that all humanity will worship YHWH (630) as central to depictions of eschatological consummation in the Twelve.

43 Hill, *Malachi*, 187; see his brief rationale on 188.

44 Pace Viberg, "Wakening," 306, who seems to be unduly influenced by Martin-Achard's view that calls to communicate with the nations, and perhaps descriptions of the nations' present practice, should not be taken literally. Contrast also Wöhrle, *Der Abschluss*, 232 n. 48, who argues, "Und angesichts der Tatsache, dass Mal 1,11a mit Partizipialkonstruktionen formuliert ist, kann dieser Vers auch nicht auf die Zuwendung der Völker zu JHWH in ferner Zukunft bezogen werden, sondern ist auf den gegenwärtigen Opferdienst der Völker zu deuten." Stuart, "Malachi," 1305, suggests that "the verb tenses of this verse may be ambiguous," and considers the chronological contrast plausible. A. Scharf, "The

important that there is no historical evidence to support worship of YHWH among the nations during this or an adjoining period.⁴⁵

Second, the suggestion that Yahweh will accept an already present tide of quasi-monotheistic (but non-Yahwistic) worship among the nations in Malachi's own day is unlikely, despite appeals to the cult of the 'God of heaven' in the Persian period.⁴⁶ The distinction between Israel and the nations is

Jonah-Narrative within the Book of the Twelve," in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve. Methodological Foundations—Redactional Processes—Historical Insights* (ed. R. Albertz, J. Nogalski, and J. Wöhrle; BZAW 433; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 109–28 (125), asserts that "a sentence with a participle and a second nominal phrase does not refer to a future event but expresses the notion that an action is durative, i.e., that it continues through time at the time of the speaker," but this is open to dispute. While J. Joosten, "The Predicative Participle in Biblical Hebrew," *ZAH* 2 (1989): 128–59, claims that Subject-Predicate order indicates durative, real-present aspect, his claims have been criticized; see Buth, "Word Order in the Verbless Clause: esp. 90–94; A. Niccacci, "Types and Functions of the Nominal Sentence," in C.L. Miller (ed.), *The Verbless Clause in Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1999), 215–48, esp. 246. Further, Joosten's proposal addresses only one of the clauses in Mal 1:11, the other two being Predicate-Subject order without a participle. To complicate matters further, the clause "and my name is/will be great among the nations" attests Predicate-Subject order.

45 This is stressed by Himbaza, "YHWH *Seba'ot* devient le grand roi," 364–66.

46 This divine title, apart from Gen 24:3, 7, appears only in later books of the OT, "where it is found in the edicts of the Persian kings . . . , in the discourses between Israelites and foreigners . . . , but also in the supplications and communications of the Israelites themselves" (Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, 227). Since it "corresponds to the title of the Zoroastrian deity Ahura Mazda" (J. Blenkinsopp, *Ezra-Nehemiah: A Commentary* [OTL; Westminster: Philadelphia, 1988], 75), this title is sometimes thought to indicate an openness to not only syncretism but full-orbed universalism, meaning that any worship offered to any deity is acceptable to a particular deity. It is much more likely, as H.G.M. Williamson notes, that "it was consistent Achaemenid polity . . . to use the title of the god or gods recognized by the local population" (*Ezra, Nehemiah* [WBC 16; Waco: Word, 1985], 11–12). It is clear that although Ahura-Mazda was the supreme deity of the Achaemenid pantheon, he "was never the sole god. . . . The thousands of Elamite administrative documents from Persepolis (late sixth and early fifth centuries BCE) show the central authority repeatedly making generous provisions for a diversity of cults in the Persian homeland, including, alongside Ahuramazda, Elamite and Babylonian gods and, perhaps, divinized local topographical features, such as rivers and mountains. There was no discernible distinction between the provisions made for Persian and non-Persian cults (contra Koch 1977)" (Kuhrt, "Persia, Persians," 776–77). This is true even for Darius I, for whose reign the arguments for a Zoroastrian background are strongest. Yamauchi observes that "Though the king focused on Ahura Mazda, Persepolis texts from Darius's reign indicate that the court also recognized numerous other gods as well. Both biblical and nonbiblical texts indicate that in general the Achaemenian kings not only tolerated other religions but actively sought

maintained across the book of Malachi by uninterrupted affirmation of Israel's election over against Esau and Edom in particular, and all the other nations in general,⁴⁷ and by consistent lexical differentiation between her and all other peoples and nations, as noted above. This consistent differentiation would be completely undermined if Israel's unique covenantal relationship with YHWH were simultaneously paralleled here and there among the nations.⁴⁸

Third, attributing the acceptability of a non-Yahwistic cult to YHWH God of Israel runs directly against much of Malachi's message, which stresses YHWH's *name* as central to the nations' acceptable behavior, 1:11. YHWH also rejects those Yehudites whose commitment to him is less than exclusive, even if only in connection with their spouse (2:11–12), and imposes the strongest possible consequences upon them.⁴⁹ Arguments that Malachi simultaneously demands exclusive YHWH-worship from Jews in Yehud but affirms that YHWH gladly receives the amorphous, non-YHWHistic worship of non-Israelites create profound incoherence within the book of Malachi, and are equally implausible elsewhere in the HB.⁵⁰ One could further argue that other ancient Near

their prayers and devotions by granting subsidies." E. Yamauchi, "Persia," in *Peoples of the Old Testament World* (ed. A.J. Hoerth, G.L. Mattingly, and E.M. Yamauchi, with a foreword by A. Millard; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 107–24 (122–23). See further P.R. Bedford, "Early Achaemenid Monarchs and Indigenous Cults: Toward the Definition of Imperial Policy," in *Religion in the Ancient World: New Themes and Approaches* (ed. M. Dillon; Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1996), 17–39; A. Kuhrt, "The Problem of Achaemenid 'Religious Policy,'" in *Welt der Götterbilder* (ed. B. Groneberg and H. Spieckermann; BZAW 376; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 117–42; J. Olley, "The God of Heaven: A Look at Attitudes to Other Religions in the Old Testament," *Colloq* 27/2 (1995): 76–94.

47 T. Collins, *The Mantle of Elijah: The Redaction Criticism of the Prophetic Books* (Biblical Seminar 20; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 81.

48 It is also notable that the few other occasions when non-Israelites worship YHWH in their own land are set in the eschatological future (Zeph 2:11; Isa 19:18–25); cf. Verhoef, *Haggai and Malachi*, 228.

49 K. Koch equates occasions on which the nations think their gods did this or that, when in reality Yahweh is responsible for the event, with a genuine faith in the 'God of the heavens' here and elsewhere. Koch, "Vom Aufgang der Sonne bis zu ihrem Untergang ist mein Name gross unter den Völkern": Maleachis Beitrag zum Verhältnis von Monotheismus und Polytheismus," in *Die Unwiderstehliche Wahrheit: Studien zur alttestamentlichen Prophetie. Festschrift für Arndt Meinhold* (ed. R. Lux and E.-J. Waschke; Arbeiten zur Bibel und Ihre Geschichte 23; Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2006), 401–13.

50 Note E. Ben Zvi: "The nations are not supposed to worship YHWH before the establishment of totally new circumstances that are dependent upon a specific action of YHWH (Zeph 3:9 ff.)." *A Historical-Critical Study of the Book of Zephaniah* (BZAW 198; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991), 337.

Eastern gods have discrete identities just as Yahweh does, and so do not possess the enormous flexibility required for their worshippers to see worship offered to those gods as in fact, or ultimately, being offered to him.⁵¹

Fourth, ‘reverence of Yahweh’s name’ is a *terminus technicus* for genuine, holistic attachment to Yahweh, and is used consistently across the HB to describe those who have and maintain a relationship with Yahweh based on its central tenets.⁵² Such relationships are often described in terms of exclusive devotion to YHWH and concomitant rejection of all other gods, as we saw in Jonah. The phrase ‘from the rising of the sun to its setting’ is also typically associated with “an eschatological demonstration of the Lord’s person to the whole inhabited earth.”⁵³

Finally, if the Twelve was redacted as a collection, and especially if Malachi was added last, why would the redactor not make such a radical revision of religious fundamentals clearer, since participles and verbless clauses are inherently vague with respect to tense? In light of the rest of the Twelve we can easily understand a turn of the nations to YHWH in the future (Amos 9:12; Micah 4:1–8; Zeph 2:11; 3:9–10; Zech 14), but regardless of the handful of sailors in Jonah, who explicitly begin to revere YHWH, we have no precedent for seeing the idea that YHWH has *all the while* been accepting generic worship on the part of the nations as his own, nor for concluding that those offering it are religiously equivalent to his faithful people. On the contrary, when YHWH renews his relationship with his people in Malachi he purifies them of all sinners (3:13–21) and calls *that* entity, not the unchanged nations, his סגולה.

13.3.3 *All the Nations Pronounce Repentant and Restored Israel Blessed*

The sole mention of ‘all the nations’ (3:12) appears in the fifth disputation (3:6–12), and follows the divine promise that if Israel amends her ways by providing adequate supplies for the temple, YHWH will pour out an overflowing blessing.

51 Meinhold, *Maleachi*, 125, observes in discussing the possibility that various nations recognize one royal “Herrschaftsvorstellung” that “Ausschlaggebend ist aber neben der Frage der Realität die der Dauer der Herrschaft; in dieser Hinsicht unterscheidet sich JHWH von allen sonstigen Königen grundlegend, denn sein Königtum währt von ur an.”

52 In addition to R. Murphy, *The Tree of Life: An Exploration of Biblical Wisdom Literature* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 16, and D. Sheriffs, *The Friendship of the LORD* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996), 162–64, note J. Becker, *Gottesfurcht im Alten Testament* (AnBib 25; Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965). Sheriffs concludes: “The spirituality of the ‘fear of the Lord’ is both the deep inward orientation and its practical outcome in behavior” (164; similarly 92–93).

53 Snyman, “Eschatology in the book of Malachi,” 72, with reference to Ps 50:1; 113:3; Isa 45:6; 59:9.

As a result of the fecundity of the land, summarized as *פרי האדמה* and *גפן*, all the nations will ‘pronounce you happy.’ This same form (Piel of *אשר*) occurs in 3:15, where Israelites who have given up on YHWH’s justice reckon the arrogant happy.⁵⁴ In 3:12, although ‘all the nations’ remain distinct from repentant and blessed Israel, their attitude toward Israel betrays no antipathy.⁵⁵ They thus cannot be correlated with Edom as described in 1:2–5, which, in any case, has already been permanently removed from the stage due to YHWH’s commitment to perpetually destroy whatever she might attempt to rebuild. Indeed, this willingness to recognize the divine blessings that might come upon Israel is the opposite of the *Schadenfreude* that characterized Edom in Obadiah. Moreover, as we noted earlier, Malachi never refers to Edom with *גוי*-language, but only with *עם*-language.

At least on the lexical level, the referent of *כל־הגוים* in 3:12 is most likely inclusive of, but larger than, the group mentioned in 1:11, 14 (non-Israelites ‘among the nations,’ *בגוים*). On the other hand, not only do the descriptions of each group prevent subdividing the nations other than Edom into the usual two groups of righteous and wicked (to use Malachi’s preferred distinction), but the activity of blessing Israel is often the response of non-Israelites to the reception of blessing through Israel (Gen 12:1–3; Ps 72:17).⁵⁶ While there are insufficient grounds to conclude that those who ‘call on YHWH’s name’ and ‘all the nations’ are coreferential in Malachi, the very positive characterization of both groups presents the reader with an intriguing choice, especially since Malachi seems to restrict all negative appraisals of non-Israelites to its treatment of Edom.

13.4 Analysis

13.4.1 *Lexical Distinction between All Non-Israelite Entities and Israel*

As is usually the case in the Twelve, ‘the nations’ remain lexically distinct from Israel throughout Malachi. They are distinct from an Israel whose present relationship with YHWH has gone seriously awry (e.g., 1:11, 14) and from a future, repentant Israel who will experience YHWH’s overflowing blessing

54 The Piel participle includes the aspect of pronouncement, which in several contexts (here and Prov 31:28, where it is parallel to Piel *הלל*) is preferable to Cazelles’ suggestion of “make (someone) happy;” see H. Cazelles, “אשר,” *TDOT* 1:445–48 (445).

55 Note especially the recognition of Israel as a land (*ארץ*), and contrast the apparent relativizing of Jerusalem as the only locale for worship in 1:11.

56 Cf. Meinhold, *Maleachi*, 331–32.

(3:12). Edom, for its part, is distinct from both Israel and all other non-Israelite groups in Malachi. Not only is Edom the only such people group identified with a proper noun, but its anticipated destruction forms the sharpest contrast possible with the extremely positive status of the generic nations discussed elsewhere in the book.

13.4.2 *Semantic Overlap between Some of the Nations and Some Yehudites*

It is very clear that some of Malachi's descriptions of non-Israelite nations, which represent them as those who will serve Yahweh acceptably (1:11) and revere him (1:14) *in the future*, overlap with several facets of the description of some within Yehud, described in Malachi as unhappy with the abuses of temple worship, as revering YHWH (3:16), and as righteous *in the present*. In the future this portion of Israel will be definitively distinguished from their inauthentic compatriots by divine intervention. These similarities in characterization are clear even though different lexical labels continue to be used for 'Israel' and 'the nations.' This same phenomenon, seen a number of times elsewhere in the Twelve, sees Malachi attribute the same characteristics to different entities, or, in Gibson's language, to attribute the same 'criteria of identity' to distinct referents.⁵⁷ As noted above, even though some of the language used of the nations is not radically inclusive (i.e., 'among the nations' rather than 'among all the nations' is used in 1:11, 14), there is no negative characterization of the nations other than Edom in the book of Malachi. Malachi's is thus in some ways the most positive presentation of the Twelve.

13.4.3 *Semantic Overlap between Edom and Some Yehudites*

Similarly, the sinful Yehudites that Malachi addresses will suffer a fate as undesirable as that of Edom if they do not repent (1:4; 3:22–24[4:4–6]). Elements of both groups are characterized with *רשע*-language, Edom in 1:4 and the wicked in Yehud in 3:18, 21[4:3]. Once again, Malachi attributes a shared identifying characteristic to ethnically and nationally different groups. Since this shared characteristic is of primary importance, the discourse effectively reduces national or ethnic distinctions to secondary roles.

One potentially positive instance of overlap between Yehud and Edom unfortunately is of little positive significance: their common descent from Abraham and Isaac. The election of Israel limits the significance of this shared

57 See A. Gibson, *Biblical Semantic Logic: A Preliminary Analysis* (2nd ed.; The Biblical Seminar 75; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 140–50, for a helpful explanation of this concept.

ancestry, and Edom's longstanding antipathy for Israel means that this link becomes the basis for its condemnation rather than for its good.

13.4.4 *Semantic Distinction between Edom and Israel*

The only explicit semantic distinction between Israel as a whole and a non-Israelite nation as a whole occurs with respect to Edom. The description of Edom in 1:2–5 sharply distinguishes it from Israel. The former is hated in covenantal terms, while the other is loved. This is an important binary distinction, rooted in an historical divine choice that, without disfavoring Esau (note the emphasis on kings and chieftains in Gen 36:31–42, as well as the proof of Esau's being blessed in Gen 33:9; 36:6–8; cf. Gen 27:39–40), locates the covenantal blessings in Jacob's line.

Ironically, while Edom's mistreatment of Israel over the centuries exposes it to divine punishment, the possibility becomes increasingly clear in Malachi that some within Yehud would undergo a similar fate (note the expulsion from the covenant community for syncretism, Mal 3:12, with ברת). This movement culminates in the divine promise to once again make unmistakable the basic distinction between righteous and wicked (3:13–18). It is significant that 3:17 uses the term סגלה to identify this new group, drawn from *within* Israel, as a new or purified Israel.⁵⁸ What began as a semantic distinction between Esau and Jacob, and later between Edom and Israel, becomes a semantic distinction between Edom and *part* of the Jews in Yehud, that part being characterized by repentance, renewal, and reverence for YHWH.

13.4.5 *The Significance of Fixed Labels with Variable Content*

The hermeneutical import of nations-language in Malachi depends in large part on the modification of known, stable categories with new content. This allows the author to advance the complex thesis that only a portion of his religious (and ethnic) community can hope to survive the coming divine judgment. Likewise, the author very effectively portrays the espousal of his own religion by many 'among the nations' in ways that concentrate on its internal, epistemological-behavioral dimension rather than on questions of ethnicity

⁵⁸ The use of סגלה (8x in HB, always referring to Israel when used of a people group: Exod 19:5–6; Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; literally 'treasure' in 1 Chron 29:13; Eccl 2:8) is a clear indicator that God is going to create a new Israel, since every time God is the owner of סגלה, it refers to national Israel (Exod 19:5; Deut 7:6, etc.). The semantics of לי are similar (national Israel, Lev 20:26; of the Levites, Num 3:13; 8:14; of Israel at the beginning, Ezek 16:8; of the northern and southern kingdoms as married to God, Ezek 23:4; of redeemed Israel, Isa 43:1).

and citizenship. In other words, the discontinuity in the book's perspective on the nations is made possible by internal changes to 'the nations' (other than Edom) and Israel alike, and is an integral part of the book's message,⁵⁹ paralleling a similar distinction within Yehud. The result stands as a testimony to a view of Israel and the non-Israelite nations that sees each individual's relation to YHWH as having unsurpassed importance.

Some discontinuous aspects of the nations-theme remain mysterious, however. The nations are not shown to suddenly submit themselves to YHWH as in Mic 4:1–5, nor are they explicitly made the object of a divine act of transformation, as in Zeph 3:9. All the same, their status as those who will bring acceptable worship to YHWH requires the reader to assume that some internal change has taken place, as does the statement that they will revere YHWH.

13.5 Conclusions

While there is strong semantic discontinuity between Edom and the other nations in Malachi, the accompanying terminological difference between the two prevents this aspect of the nations-theme from becoming incoherent. Similarly, the rejection of the cult offered by some of the Yehudites and the acceptability of the cult offered by some among all the nations (except Edom) is paralleled by the inner-Yehud distinction between righteous and wicked that becomes determinative in the book's most developed eschatological section (3:17–21).⁶⁰ Almost every aspect of the nations-theme in Malachi shows significant development or discontinuity, something hardly surprising for a book produced in a postexilic context and focused to some degree on the

59 Harvey, *True Israel*, 187–88, does not fully appreciate the significance of this inner-Israel distinction, particularly the expulsion of some from Israel and the redefinition of the entity. "Whilst an ideal is continually proclaimed, 'Israel' remains the name of all the people however closely they approximate these ideals. . . . The attempt to make the people into a god-fearing nation . . . is not made by denying the name 'Israel' to 'rebels'. 'Sinners' are condemned but remain 'Israel'. . . . Despite the entire arsenal of legal and prophetic threats, nothing that Israel does finally and irrevocably alters Israel's identity as God's chosen audience. In fact, such threats only reinforce Israel's identity by giving voice again and again to God's expectation of a response. Israel is therefore 'Israel' precisely when it is in rebellion and being addressed yet again by God who chose this particular audience."

60 See on this final perspective especially Snyman, "Eschatology."

purification of the postexilic community itself through YHWH's eschatological intervention.⁶¹

On the level of terminology there are small variations, as between בגוים in 1:6–14 and כל־הגוים in 3:12. While one could argue that the author/redactor of 3:12 was unaware of, or not in agreement with, the content of 1:6–14 (even though he used almost exactly the same terminology), this minor variation is at least amenable of other explanations, and probably does not carry such significance. The discussion above has shown that there is good reason to see this varying terminology as equivalent, or nearly so, both in terms of sense and referent. There remains a slight possibility that Edom would be included in the referents of both 1:6–14 and 3:6–12, and if so this would require us to see additional tension within the category of the nations. However, the diametrically-opposed fates of the unnamed nations and Edom makes it unlikely that the author of Malachi thought of them as belonging to the same category.

In sum, Malachi's contribution to a theology of the nations in the Twelve is complex. The book's insistence on Edom's definitive destruction would appear to be in tension with Amos 9:12, where although purified Israel under the renewed Davidic dynasty possesses the remnant of Edom along with "all the nations over whom [YHWH's] name is called," the element of divine wrath against Edom in particular is absent. On the other hand, Mal 1:2–5 is paralleled by Obad 15–21.

To avoid facile assumptions of tension where little or none exists, it is notable that Amos sees not Edom, but the *remnant* of Edom, come under the sway of the renewed Davidic line. Further, there is likely some degree of transformation that is inseparable from Edom's being made YHWH's people in Amos. In other words, Amos 9:12 presents a very malleable Edom that, far from taking up arms against YHWH or his anointed as historical Edom typically did, comes under YHWH's rule and on that basis cannot be connected to an element of destruction. Obadiah, for its part, attributes to Edom the same arrogance that she showed in her decision to resist YHWH's punishment, and so foresees only Edom's destruction. Mal 1:2–5 can thus be directly compared with Obadiah, since the two characterize Edom in very similar ways.

61 A. Scharf, "Großeinheit," 242, speaks of "eine starke Individualisierung" in Mal 3:12–21. Whether the book falls nearer the middle or the end of the Persian period, such issues would have been pressing for its audience; see O. Lipschits, G.N. Knoppers, and M. Oeming (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Achaemenid Period: Negotiating Identity in an International Context* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011), and O. Lipschits, G.N. Knoppers, and R. Albertz (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century BCE* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2007).

Malachi's recognition that worship offered to YHWH by the nations, *where they are*, will be acceptable to YHWH is paralleled only a few times within the Twelve (Jon 1:16; Zeph 2:11; cf. Mic 4:1–4) and outside it (e.g., Isa 19:19–22).⁶² Other passages in the Twelve express different views, sometimes regarding the Second Temple as the sole acceptable site for worship (cf. Zechariah 14) and other times foreseeing the destruction of the nations on a very large scale (Joel 4). The degree to which these views are contradictory or complementary has yet to be explored in detail, although our findings so far suggest that pronouncements that the nations will be destroyed typically involve their characterization as YHWH's (and Israel's/Judah's) enemies, while passages in which the nations escape or survive judgment usually give some indication of a substantial change in their disposition toward Israel and her deity.⁶³ The investigation of such correspondences between individual books of the Twelve will be taken up in the next chapter.

62 On Zeph 2:11 see H. Irsigler, *Zefanja* (HTKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2002), 276–78, who compares it with Mal 1:11 and concludes that it describes “eine universal JHWH-Verehrung . . . die an jedem Wohnort der Gläubigen möglich und nicht (mehr) an das Zentrum Jerusalem gebunden ist” (277). H. Wildberger despairs of dating Isa 19:19–22, but recognizes that the altar in Egypt mentioned there is “a place where offerings were brought;” *Isaiah* 13–27 (CC; trans. T.H. Trapp; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 275.

63 Collins's suggestion that Malachi shares with the rest of the Twelve the idea “that Jerusalem is a holy city, destined to be the world centre of a universal worship of the Lord by all nations” might be seen as allowing for both worship outside Israel and a focus on the temple in the eschatological era; *Mantle of Elijah*, 81.

The Nations and the Twelve

14.1 Summary of the Study's Findings in Terms of the Individual Books

The preceding chapters have traced the contours of the nations-theme across individual books of the Twelve, occasionally reflecting on the relationship between adjacent books or between books with notable similarities or differences. It remains only to systematically trace the contours of the theme through the Twelve as a collection. Before doing so, it will be helpful to summarize our findings regarding each individual book of the Twelve and to give some indication of the degree of coherence that each book's treatment of the nations exhibits.

Hosea opens the collection on a curious note, giving very limited attention to the nations on their own terms and insisting that Israel must refrain from putting any trust in them. Israel's future punishment will come at the hands of the nations (10:10; 13:16), but YHWH will eventually bring her out of exile and espouse her once again. In that eschatological context Israel is encouraged to jettison once and for all her misplaced trust in the nations and to fix her hopes on YHWH alone (Hosea 14). Hosea's characterization of the nations as those who can bring Israel only harm by drawing her trust away from her God is consistent across past, present, and future scenarios.

Joel gives much more attention to the nations than does Hosea. The nations in Joel are characterized in almost exclusively negative terms as the means by which YHWH punishes his people in the present (Joel 2) and as those who will oppose YHWH directly in the future (Joel 4). Joel 3, however, adds significant complexity to the nations-theme by introducing obliquely the possibility that some among the nations may repent and that deliverance would be granted to them. While the separation of the nations into two subgroups is not in itself an illogical scenario, the suddenness with which this possibility is introduced and the nearly monochromatic presentation of the future fate of the 'nations' in Joel 4 makes Joel's treatment of the theme one whose coherence is more fragile or uncertain. Sufficient lexical and semantic distinction is maintained between those (Israelites and non-Israelites) who might repent and the 'nations' who persist in opposition to YHWH for the theme to be coherent, but the reader must accept the unexplained possibility that some non-Israelites would turn to YHWH and the challenging juxtaposition of those two characterizations of non-Israelites in what appears to be the same general setting.

Like Joel, Amos gives substantial attention to the nations, asserting their guilt in the present and affirming that punishment is inevitable. At the same time, Amos focuses most of its condemnation on Israelites, and makes Israel's eschatological restoration inseparable from that of the nations. Amos 9:11–12 is particularly important for the nations-theme, and seems to envision some of the nations coming under the beneficent sway of a restored Davidide as part of a radically new relationship with YHWH. Unlike Joel, Amos's eschatology bypasses any possible antipathy between the nations and restored Israel in this utopian future, so despite its temporal shifts the coherence of the theme is more apparent than in Joel. The coherence of the nations-theme is also reinforced by nearly parallel developments in the case of Israel, a remnant of which escapes future judgment and experiences the consummation of the covenant relationship (9:13–15).

Following immediately on this positive vision of the nations as part of Israel's future, Obadiah leaves little if any place for their deliverance. While the book concentrates its attention on Edom, the other nations are eventually shown to share the same negative characterization and fate, so that Judah's deliverance is inseparable from the downfall of the nations defined as her enemies. This negative characterization of the nations is consistent from the recent past through the very end of the present age, when they will finally be removed from the scene (Obad 15–16), and is therefore coherent throughout the book.

The quite exceptional book of Jonah sets itself apart by bringing the nations' repentance into the narrative past, while everywhere else in the Twelve it is limited to the future. The display of divine mercy to the nations on the basis of YHWH's character as described in Exodus 34 is consistent with the general idea of the nations being accepted by YHWH in the future, but is wholly unprecedented within the Twelve. The only significant temporal shifts in Jonah are occasioned by the prophet's interactions with the sailors, whose religious identity becomes emphatically YHWHistic by the end of chapter 1, and with the Ninevites, whose repentance is less complete but still significant enough to see the city escape its threatened destruction.

The book of Micah foresees both judgment and deliverance for both Israel/Judah and the nations, and is similar in that respect to Amos. Like Amos, Micah also sees good coming to the nations through Judah (Mic 4:1–4; 5:6[7]), although Micah complements that positive role with a negative one (5:7[8] and elsewhere). Micah's negative characterization of the nations applies to them in the present (4:9–13) and in the future, while its positive treatment of the nations is limited to the future and is based most clearly on those nations' submission to YHWH (4:1–5). This temporal dynamism and the clearly differentiated characterizations of two groups within the nations allow the reader

to perceive coherence in a theme that is chronologically dynamic and involves the division of a single referent (the nations, viewed only negatively in the present) into two distinct groups in the future. Of course, if the prerequisite for coherence is simplicity rather than complexity, or continuity rather than dynamism, Micah's treatment of the theme may well appear to lack substantial coherence.

At first glance the book of Nahum would appear to show little complexity in the nations-theme due to its persistent condemnation of Assyria, whose characterization is monochromatic and entirely negative. But the anticipated destruction of Assyria entails the deliverance of Judah along with the other vassals and victims of the empire, and this overlap forces the reader to wrestle once again with a treatment of the theme that makes a distinction within the collective of non-Israelite nations. While YHWH's exclusive and strongly affirmed relationship with Judah ensures that there is little danger of confusing Judah's identity with that of her fellow victims, the manner in which Nahum limits its theological and moral condemnation to the Assyrian empire prevents the reader from concluding that YHWH's retribution is directed along ethnic lines. The general tone of its opening hymn, with its offer of refuge to all who trust in YHWH (Nah 1:7), is nearly identical to that of Joel 3, although like Joel the eschatological deliverance of a group described without reference to their nationality or ethnicity is not developed.

The first two chapters of Habakkuk share the same orientation as Nah 1:9–3:18, but Habakkuk 3 moves in a very different direction. The shift in the nations' identity from Habakkuk 1–2 to Hab 3:1–15 is not explained, but occurs in concert with a temporal shift from Judah's present to the eschatological future. Once the nations were Judah's fellow victims under the Babylonian scourge and their description lacked any hint of their opposition to YHWH, but in the future the same terminology designates a group characterized in nearly the same terms as Babylon, meaning the proud, 'wicked' enemy of YHWH (1:13; 3:12–13). This is perhaps the clearest example in the Twelve of the redefinition of the referent of נַגְּלִים-language.¹ Even here coherence can be preserved if the reader judges that the different settings, characterizations, and fates developed in the book do indeed demonstrate that different referents are in view. As was the case in Amos and Micah, similar dynamics in the Israel/Judah theme and the interlinked fates of Israel/Judah and the nations mean that one's understanding of the nations-theme will also impact the Israel/Judah theme.

Zephaniah's treatment of the nations shows the most challenging contours in 2:11 and 3:9, which in sharp contrast to their surrounding contexts announce

1 Cf. the discussion above in section 1.2.4.

that some non-Israelites will one day worship and serve YHWH. Both passages use very potent descriptions of this religious transformation, so that the characterization-fate relationship remains clear. These transformations also have settings that are distinct from the book's point of departure, in which all humanity is threatened by Yahweh's looming judgment. The nations-theme in future and eschatological settings sees some nations turn to YHWH and find deliverance while others apparently persist in their opposition to him and his people and so meet the opposite fate. The question of coherence thus turns on the possibility, already seen in most of the preceding books in the Twelve, of combining in one coherent discourse perspectives in which some of the nations experience well and others woe. Zephaniah seems to add a third category by presenting a group of nations that will recognize the glory of restored Zion but are neither Yahweh's worshippers nor his enemies (3:18–20). While rather unique within the Twelve, this aspect of Zephaniah's presentation presents some difficulty at the level of clarity rather than at the level of semantic coherence.

The book of Haggai presents a simpler treatment of the nations-theme. An initial state in which the nations are at least implicitly opposed to YHWH is severely disrupted when he 'shakes' them, and their responses to this intervention determine their fates. Those who submit to YHWH's sovereignty express a reconciled relationship with him as evidenced by their contributions to the Second Temple once it is glorified, while those who militate against him and his people will be definitively destroyed. These chronological shifts and the division of the nations into two groups add some complexity to the theme, but the clear characterizations of both groups and the unveiling of their corresponding fates favor the theme's coherence.

For the most part, Zechariah's approach to non-Israelites is similar to Haggai's, and even clearer at several points. A chronological divide between the past and future in Zechariah appears consistently in its twofold characterization of the nations. Whereas in the past the nations have acted in exclusively culpable and aggressive ways, in the future some of the nations will continue as aggressors while others will "join themselves to YHWH" and worship him alongside his faithful people. Zechariah's Yehudite audience will undergo a similar bipartite division in the future, so that both Israelites and non-Israelites are divided on the basis of their disposition toward YHWH and their resulting behavior. As was the case in Zephaniah, but with more frequency, Zechariah juxtaposes affirmations that the nations will come to grief and that they will be delivered. These contrasting fates appear with enough frequency that coherence must either give way to the complexity of such potentially contradictory views, or may be preserved by demonstrating that these contrasting fates are

articulated in connection with different characterizations of the 'nations' and that the single referent of the 'nations' simply becomes two in Zechariah's eschatology.

The collection closes with Malachi, which contrasts the rest of the nations with Edom much as Nahum and Habakkuk contrasted them with Assyria and Babylon, respectively. In Malachi, however, the future characterization of the nations other than Edom is extremely positive. While not 'all' nations are explicitly foreseen as becoming YHWH's worshippers (cf. 1:11, 14), Malachi does see 'all' of them pronouncing blessing on restored Israel in the future (3:12). The picture of acceptable worship eventually being offered to YHWH from across the globe (1:11, 14) is one of the most positive images in the Twelve, and also bypasses any mention of final discord between restored Israel and non-Israelites.² While the theme involves chronological dynamism in the shift from present to future, the fact that the nations other than Edom are never described negatively in the present makes their future transformation into worshippers of YHWH more plausible than otherwise, and this element of coherence is reinforced by similar dynamics in Israel which see the current remnant become the exhaustive referent of 'Israel' (3:16–18).

14.2 Systematization of the Study's Findings Across the Twelve

The contours of the nations-theme in each of the constituent books of the Twelve, summarized above, clearly exhibit significant variety. Our goal is now to reflect on and synthesize as far as possible these various perspectives at the level of the collection before moving on to consider several related issues.

Quite predictably for a body of Israelite-Judahite-Yehudite literature, the non-Israelite nations never appear in the Twelve without some sort of connection to Israel. Further, the initial relationship of the nations to Israel/Judah is always unfavorable, at least in part. Apparent exceptions to this orientation appear in three books that focus almost exclusively on condemning one prominent state to the exclusion of the others. Nahum and Habakkuk both condemn the dominant empire of their day, and see Judah and the rest of the non-Israelite nations in the present as the victims of those empires, while Malachi limits its condemnation to Edom and offers no critique of the other nations in the present. As noted in earlier chapters, Nahum and Habakkuk do not affirm the other nations' innocence—their wrongs are simply ignored in

2 The destruction of the 'arrogant' and 'evil doers' in the Day of YHWH (3:19) appears to limit itself to the wicked in Israel; cf. the same terms (עשי רשעה and זדים) in 3:15.

order to focus on the actions and ideologies of Assyria and Babylon. Indeed, while Nahum leaves aside the larger question of the relation of the nations to YHWH, Habakkuk only delays it until some point in the future, when it takes on very negative traits. These apparent exceptions to the pattern of an initially unfavorable relationship between Israel/Judah/Yehud and the nations are thus, upon closer inspection, not clear exceptions, since at most they merely omit explicit condemnations of some of the nations in the present.³

This Israel-nations opposition and the specter of judgment coming against some or all non-Israelite groups suggest a useful distinction between the Twelve's various perspectives on the nations. The twelve books can be subdivided most simply into two groups: those that leave this initial negative characterization of the nations unchanged, and those that describe some of the nations as eventually leaving this initial status and coming into a beneficial relationship with Israel/Judah and with YHWH. The first of these groups can be subdivided further based on the presence or absence of features which attenuate this negative outlook.⁴ The resulting categories move from more negative to more positive perspectives on the nations:

- CLASS 1 (OBADIAH). Obadiah presents *all the nations (including Edom) as consistently opposed to YHWH and Israel/Judah in the past, present and future alike*, and on that account doomed to punishment and destruction in the end.⁵ The nations' characterization and fate are one-dimensional and static.
- CLASS 2 (HABAKKUK). Habakkuk 1–2 *condemns Babylon to destruction because of its pride and idolatry in particular, and announces the liberation of the other nations in the near future as an outcome of Babylon's punishment*. The eschatologically-oriented theophanic hymn in Habakkuk 3 characterizes *all the nations as opposed to YHWH and his people in the eschatological future, and announces their destruction for that reason*. In that eschatological context, the nations (previously neither guilty nor innocent) are cast as YHWH's opponents while Babylon (until now the anticipated target of divine wrath)

3 We can infer that YHWH's unique relationship to Israel/Judah accounts for this initial difference between her and all other nations.

4 There is no easily identifiable feature which similarly distinguishes a spectrum within the group that anticipates the nations' well-being (Class 5).

5 In this context, I use 'end' to refer to the ultimate, eschatological destiny of the group in question. This allows us to distinguish, for example, between the historical and limited punishment of Edom in Amos 1:11–12 and the final paradigm proposed for the remnant of Edom in Amos 9:11–12.

disappears from the scene, presumably having fallen in accord with the predication of its destruction earlier in the book.⁶ Habakkuk's characterization of the nations is dynamic, shifting from non-evaluation to strong condemnation as the perspective moves from the near future to eschatology. Their fate follows suit, changing from deliverance from Babylon in the near future to destruction at the end.

- CLASS 3 (HOSEA). Hosea offers only a truncated characterization of the nations, essentially limited to their involvement in Israelite international relations. Further, this limited data is evaluated only as it concerns Israel, so that Hosea's characterization of the nations *never leads to a conclusive evaluation of their behavior, nor does it offer a clear prediction of their fate*. One might suggest that Hosea implicitly denies salvation to the nations by seeing them as useless and dangerous for Israel, but the book offers no explicit basis on which to affirm or deny this inference, and it must remain a (dubious) argument from silence. Hosea thus defines the middle of the spectrum, proposing neither the deliverance nor the judgment of the nations.
- CLASS 4 (NAHUM). Like Habakkuk, Nahum *condemns Neo-Assyria to destruction and announces the liberation of the other nations, who are identified monochromatically as the empire's victims*. The fact that in the apparently eschatological setting of the opening hymn (1:2–8) YHWH will be a refuge to all who trust in him, with no mention of their ethnic or national identity (1:7), complicates efforts to place Nahum in one of the classes developed here. It could almost be placed in class 5, except for the fact that the explicit universalistic language like that found in Joel 3 is absent from Nahum 1:2–8 (but cf. בלִישְׁבִי בָהּ, 1:5). Apart from the opening hymn, Nahum presents the nations as predominantly static and neither guilty nor innocent. Assyria's identity as the guilty enemy of YHWH is monochromatic and unchanging across the book.
- CLASS 5 (JOEL, AMOS, JONAH, MICAH, ZEPHANIAH, HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH, MALACHI). These books affirm that *some from among the nations* have (Jonah), can (Joel), or will (the others) enter a positive relationship with Israel/Judah and YHWH and so will not be punished in the end (no eschatological facet appears in Jonah). The means by which the nations enter this beneficial relationship vary. In the order of the list immediately above, YHWH's spirit will be poured out upon all flesh, and deliverance made available to all who seek it from YHWH (Joel), some from among the nations will

6 P. House helpfully explores several aspects of the Nahum-Habakkuk relationship in "Dramatic Coherence in Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah," in *Forming Prophetic Literature* (ed. J.D.W. Watts and P.R. House; JSOTSup 235; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 195–208.

come into Israel under Davidic sway (Amos), have converted or repented and recognize YHWH's supremacy (Jonah), will hear YHWH's torah, worship him, and receive good from the Judahite remnant (Micah), will recognize YHWH's supremacy, then worship and call on him harmoniously (Zephaniah), will recognize YHWH's supremacy and offer tribute (Haggai), become YHWH's people and worship him alongside Jews in Jerusalem (Zechariah), and will worship YHWH acceptably across the globe (Malachi).⁷ The nature of the deliverance in which these transformed nations participate is variously described, but is consistently linked to a major facet of YHWH's promises of deliverance and well-being for Israel (e.g., well-being under the restored Davidic monarchy and Sinai covenant in Amos 9, etc.)

It is evident that some of these five categories overlap those proposed by J. Wöhrle and others, and that other commonly noted details, especially the distinction between generic and specific addresses to the nations, are left aside. The reasons for this latter decision having been stated above, here it suffices to recall that Wöhrle's categories refer to redactions that span the Twelve (or much of it) but which are so precisely defined in both semantic and chronological terms that they cannot be applied satisfactorily to any one book in its entirety. The categories proposed here are not simply broadened versions that accommodate more material, however. Rather, they reflect varying degrees of detail or generalization evident in each of the books concerned. Moreover, by encompassing a whole book (or books), each category allows for the coherence of individual books in the collection, and of groups of books across the Twelve, with respect to the nations-theme. The question of whether the collection as a whole coheres with respect to our chosen theme raises other issues that we will now take up.

14.3 Coherence in the Twelve: Can It Be Found, and on What Terms?

With ample evidence of diversity and discontinuity in the nations-theme before us, we are now prepared to consider how the coherence of the theme across the Twelve might be articulated.⁸ The emphasis on the nations' often

⁷ Not every nuance noted in the earlier chapters is preserved here.

⁸ Recall that thematic coherence as studied here is a subset of conceptual coherence, and so distinct from perspectival and other varieties of coherence. See K.H. Cuffey, "Remnant, Redactor, and Biblical Theologian: A Comparative Study of Coherence in Micah and the Twelve," in *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve* (ed. J.D. Nogalski and M.A. Sweeney;

complex characterization and the link between characterization and fate mean that simple oppositions that ignore that connection, as when Jonah is caricatured as ‘deliverance for Assyria’ and Nahum as ‘punishment for Assyria,’ are reductionist and so should be discarded.

14.3.1 *Measuring Coherence*

What indices can be used to gauge the coherence of the nations-theme? If we take J. Wöhrle’s nations-layers as an example, the nations material in the Twelve and in its constituent books shows incoherence as regards the binary salvation/destruction opposition (Fremdvölker I and II over against Heil-für-die-Völker) and the object of judgment (against all the nations as a group in Fremdvölker I, but against specific nations in Fremdvölker II). These differences allow Wöhrle to identify these redactional layers and to attribute them to a variety of historical and socio-political settings spanning the fifth to the third centuries BCE.⁹

The present work has plotted a different course through the Twelve and its individual books by exploring the link between the different characterizations of the nations and their different fates, and by allowing a given author to articulate more than one perspective on the nations (in the absence of outright contradiction) rather than attributing those aspects of thematic complexity to multiple authors. The possibility that multiple perspectives on the nations could be coherent was especially plausible when those perspectives were situated in distinct chronological settings by means of explicit diachronic indicators in the text. While compositional approaches also note the different ways that the Twelve characterizes the nations, they characteristically argue that the fates of the nations are so diverse that the perspectives could not come from the same author or matrix (social, political, religious, or other). Regardless of whether divergent perspectives on the nations have the same point of origin, this study has emphasized the possibility that the articulation of different fates for the nations on the basis of different characterizations, especially if the different fates and characterizations are located in different chronological settings,

SBL Symposium Series 15; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2000), 185–208; R. Schultz, “The Ties that Bind: Intertextuality, the Identification of Verbal Parallels, and Reading Strategies in the Book of the Twelve,” in *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve* (ed. P.L. Redditt and A. Scharf; BZAW 325; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 27–45; and J. Nogalski, “Intertextuality in the Twelve,” in *Forming Prophetic Literature* (ed. J.W. Watts and P.R. House; JSOTSup 235; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 102–24.

9 See J. Wöhrle, *Der Abschluss des Zwölfprophetenbuchs: Buchübergreifende Redaktionsprozesse in den späten Sammlungen* (BZAW 389; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 19, 161–64, 279–81, 351–54.

removes some of the grounds for seeing judgment-for-the-nations and salvation-for-the-nations as incompatible and therefore incoherent when appearing together in a text. Similarly, by attending to the complex ways in which the nations as a generic whole and as particular states are characterized, this study questions the hermetic separation of general oracles against the nations from oracles against specific states as well as the presupposition of chronological order that sees general oracles appearing earlier and specific oracles only later, or vice-versa.¹⁰

Coherence as defined in this study involves the successful integration or interrelation of a text's surface elements and sub-surface concepts. The preceding chapters have therefore attempted to clarify the limits of coherence in each of the books that make up the Twelve by attending to the lexical and semantic aspects of the nations-theme. The basis for identifying the redactional layers noted immediately above is much simpler, and can be compared to the basic rules of logic. Logical consistency is of course presupposed by conceptual coherence, but the diversity of fates and characterizations attributed to the nations in the Twelve invites a closer look at this prerequisite of coherence.

In logical terms, incoherence would be most evident when contradictory affirmations are made of the same entity in the same circumstances.¹¹ Incoherence would thus arise if two mutually exclusive fates were predicted for one and the same entity with a single, unchanging characterization. For example, two passages within one text referring to the same future scenario might affirm that "on date X, all Egypt will be punished because it depends on the Nile," *and* that "on date X, all Egypt will be delivered because it depends on the Nile." Incoherence would also be present in cases in which two entities with mutually exclusive characterizations undergo the same fate. As an

10 E.g., Wöhrle, *Der Abschluss*, 191. Contrast D.L. Peterson's conclusion: "Oracles concerning specific nations in the later Latter Prophets are primarily a phenomenon of the monarchic period. They are either pre-exilic, so Zeph 2, or rooted in pre-exilic historical realities (Zech 9)." Peterson, "Israel and the Nations in the Later Latter Prophets," in *Constructs of Prophecy in the Former & Latter Prophets & Other Texts* (ed. L.L. Grabbe and M. Nissinen; Ancient Near Eastern Monographs 4; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 157–64 (163). P. Raabe's contention that the order cannot be universally established with any confidence is a salutary caution against making the shift from specific to general a linchpin of a redactional reconstruction; cf. Raabe, "The Particularizing of Universal Judgment in Prophetic Discourse," *CBQ* 64 (2002): 652–74.

11 Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book 4, part 4, and note the helpful discussion in "Aristotle on Non-contradiction," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (online at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-noncontradiction/>, accessed 21 February 2014). The laws of identity and of the excluded middle are less relevant to the data at hand.

example, consider the statements “Those nations who attack Jerusalem will be destroyed because they show no reverence for YHWH” and “Jerusalem will be destroyed because she shows reverence for YHWH.” While not formulated in accord with the strict grammar of philosophy, such statements are clearly incoherent, since they prevent the unification of two particular articulations of action–consequence relationships under one coherent understanding of justice or causation.

To take the opposite extreme, the law of non-contradiction is most evidently preserved in cases where contrasting fates are tied to distinct entities that possess contrasting characterizations. Such would be the case in the affirmation “Edom will be punished for her rebellion against YHWH, but Judah will be delivered because she submits to YHWH.” While such affirmations are quite common in the Twelve, others are more complex but should also be recognized as non-contradictory. For example, a single grammatical subject can be characterized in different ways (whether in different temporal settings or not), effectively splitting the referent in two by making its identity complex (i.e., twofold or bipartite). Such complexity appears frequently in the Twelve, as we have seen. For example, ‘the house of Israel’ in Amos 9:9–10 is separated into ‘sinners’ and the rest of YHWH’s people. Similarly, while the nations in Habakkuk 1–2 are Babylon’s victims and are apparently not opposed to YHWH in any way, in Habakkuk 3 the nations are paralleled with the wicked and YHWH crushes their head as a result (Hab 3:12–13). Both examples preserve coherence while adding complexity to one aspect of the theme, showing that the incoherence—coherence relationship is a spectrum and not a binary opposition, and certainly cannot be reduced to the rule that different perspectives on the same subject necessarily imply contradiction.

14.3.2 *Coherence of the Twelve Possible Despite Varying Fates*

With this nuance in mind, we return to the varied presentations of the nations in the Twelve. The static element in some of the five classes identified above denies to some or all of the nations the deliverance that is available to some of them in the dynamic paradigm present to varying degrees in other classes, and this poses problems for the theme’s coherence across the Twelve. In order for coherence to be possible (i.e., to satisfy at least the criterion of non-contradiction), it is necessary to show that the books which condemn the nations do so in terms that are not merely distinct from, but sufficiently different from, the grounds on which other books foresee the nations’ future wellbeing. More specifically, coherence is possible if books which deny deliverance to the nations deny it to them *exclusively as* opponents of YHWH and Israel rather than in ethnic or political terms, and if books presenting the deliverance of some of

the nations see that deliverance coming only to nations *defined as* those who abandon their opposition to YHWH and Israel.¹²

The present study has argued that divergent perspectives like these appear side by side in most books in the Twelve, but also that a consistent logic for judgment and deliverance is apparent throughout. Consequently one can suggest that despite differences in referent (Nineveh/Assyria in Jonah and Nahum; 'the nations' in Joel and in Zephaniah, etc.), the careful characterization of the nations and the attribution to them of various fates based on those varied characterizations preserves the nations-theme in the Twelve from severe incoherence. In other words, the Twelve does not assign mutually exclusive fates to a group with a consistent characterization (whether in the same historical setting or not), nor does it assign a common fate to two groups with diametrically opposed characterizations.¹³ Further, the Twelve never condemns the nations on the basis of their ethnic otherness compared to Israel, so that the 'nations' category is predominantly a religious one throughout the collection.

Before moving on, we should note the shift in the 'text' whose coherence is in question in the above discussion, from the individual books of the Twelve, each with a clear beginning and end, to the Twelve as a composite text made up of twelve writings. While coherence of a part does not necessarily imply the coherence of the whole, the scenario here is rather that the parts are (individually) more or less coherent with respect to the nations-theme. What does this imply for the coherence of the Twelve as a collection?

14.3.3 *Coherence of the Twelve and More Significant Differences*

Even if the nations-theme is coherent across the Twelve as regards the characterization-fate relation, and even if it is free of obvious self-contradiction, any attempt to determine its coherence must reckon with the degree to which it accommodates the radical complexity and diversity in terms of terminology, historical context, referents, and perspective, at the level of individual

12 While this does not fully resolve tensions (i.e., moderate incoherence) arising from different characterization and fates for the same group in roughly the same setting (one might contrast Edom in Amos 1:11–13 with the remnant of Edom in Amos 9:11–12), the difficulty of determining the precise referent of much nations-language in the Twelve makes it difficult to identify explicit contradictions (i.e., the same group at the same time assigned two contrasting fates).

13 Compare P.L. Redditt's conclusion that the Book of the Twelve (a redactional unity, on his view) "is a historical review justifying God's past dealings with Israel and the nations;" Redditt, "Zechariah 9–14, Malachi, and the Redaction of the Book of the Twelve," in *Forming Prophetic Literature* (ed. J.W. Watts and P.R. House; JSOTSup 235; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 245–68 (268).

books and much more so at the level of the collection. Thus far this chapter has argued that the varying fates of the nations in the collection are coherent if one takes into account the different characterizations that lead to them (and, often, the different temporal settings of those characterizations and fates), but the larger question of how the theme in all its variety coheres across the Twelve has yet to be explored.

It seems possible to affirm the coherence of the nations-theme across the collection as long as the same multiperspectivalism encountered in individual books is accepted at the level of the collection. In other words, the Twelve-collection treats the non-Israelite nations, which in empirical terms are different groups in different historical settings, in a coherent way because, first, predications of wellbeing or punishment are consistently correlated with their characterization as being (respectively) in a restored relationship to YHWH and no longer opposed to him or his people, or as continuing their opposition to YHWH and his people. Second, in cases where one referent is assigned two different fates, e.g., 'the nations' in Habakkuk, this apparent contradiction can be resolved by noting that this one referent is characterized in two different ways, each of which correlates with a corresponding fate. In short, the basis for affirming the coherence of the nations-theme across the Twelve is the same for its coherence in individual books, and takes into account different temporal settings, changes in characterization, and related dynamics. This thematic coherence need not imply the literary unity of the collection, however.

This can be explained by way of an analogy. Imagine looking at a landscape through a variety of lenses, one after the other. Some lenses block some colors partially, others block one or more colors completely. Some lenses have a focus point nearby, while others give clear views of only the most distant features of the landscape. The predominant impression the viewer would have after studying the landscape through a dozen or so lenses is one of difference, since each optic offers a distinct, even unique, representation of the landscape (in part or in whole). If the viewer thought that every optic presented a full and complete image, coherence would be impossible because no two images are identical. On the other hand, if the partial and incomplete nature of each optic's representation is assumed, coherence is not only possible but is realized, since each optic presents an intelligible portion of the same landscape. The composite image of all the optics together would render the full landscape accurately while also helping the viewer see how each individual optic contributes to an accurate perception of the whole.

Among the assumptions involved in this analogy, the most important (beside the same landscape constituting the field of view) is that each optic faithfully represents some aspect of the landscape. This assumption raises issues of

historical referentiality that have been addressed from time to time, but which have not been the focus of our attention. This is not because historical representation is absent from the collection—every book in the Twelve develops a historical setting by means of its superscription and various points of contact with the history of Israel, Judah, or Yehud in its ancient Near Eastern context. Nor is our assumption of historical plausibility tied to a preference for a thematic coherence approach, since any holistic approach must take full account of the text's various diachronic markers. Rather, because the vast majority of the perspectives on the nations in the Twelve are set in the future, only rarely do issues of a historical nature enter the discussion.¹⁴ The international landscape viewed by the Twelve is almost entirely in the future, and so the assumption that each book's perspective is one faithful lens used alongside others involves a different set of concerns whose plausibility will be determined in relation to the corpus's claims regarding future divine intervention in particular, something which lies outside the historian's purview.¹⁵

The different historical settings of each book and of each book's various sections are in tension with another assumption in the landscape analogy above, that of simultaneity. While chronological dynamism was excluded from the above analogy since the images were effectively simultaneous (no trees changed color, no animals entered or left the field of view, etc.), the nature of the Twelve is quite different. The chronological variety of its perspectives inevitably entails greater diversity, but it also increases the likelihood that differences might be explained by those different historical settings, a fundamental facet of any reading (holistic or compositional) and one that has been appealed to repeatedly in the preceding chapters.¹⁶

14 Note N. Na'aman, "Does archaeology really deserve the status of a 'high court' in biblical historical research?" and the related (and sometimes opposed) essays in *Between Evidence and Ideology: Essays on the History of Ancient Israel Read at the Joint Meeting of the Society for Old Testament Study and the Oud Testamentisch Werkgezelschap, Lincoln, July 2009* (ed. B. Becking and L. Grabbe; *OtSt* 59; Leiden: Brill 2011), 165–83.

15 Related issues arise in historiography; see S. Berry, "The Laws of History," in *A Companion to the Philosophy of History and Historiography* (ed. A. Tucker; Blackwell Companions to Philosophy; paperback ed.; London: Blackwell, 2011), 163–71.

16 Note D.L. Peterson: "The vocabulary of temporality—of time—is a key to understanding the Twelve." "A Book of the Twelve?" in *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve* (ed. J.D. Nogalski and M.A. Sweeney; SBL Symposium Series 15; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2000), 3–10 (10). Similarly, R. Rendtorff, "How to Read the Book of the Twelve as a Theological Unity," in *Reading and Hearing the Book of the Twelve* (ed. J.D. Nogalski and M.A. Sweeney; SBL Symposium Series 15; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2000), 75–87.

This analogy highlights several key interests of a reader interested in coherence: the single 'landscape' of the Twelve, the different perceptions of the nations transmitted by the various lenses, and the importance of recognizing the temporal dynamism of the field of view, with nations entering it at one point, then leaving, and often returning with a radically changed appearance.

This dynamism, which involves especially shifts in chronology and characterization, is probably the most significant aspect of the nations theme that this study has highlighted. Its import for the coherence of the nations theme is multifaceted, and makes possible the coherence of multiperspectival representations like Habakkuk's as well as the occasional overlap (in terms of fate or destiny) between the remnants of the nations and of Israel on the one hand, and those not in the remnants of Israel/Judah and of the nations on the other. Similarly, this study's dual focus on the lexical and semantic aspects of the nations' identities has made clear that while Israel/Judah and the nations are habitually separated on the level of terminology, their identities are often malleable, and as groups their borders are often porous. The semantics of each group's characterization have often led to the relativization of national identities in favor of religious ones (e.g., Zeph 3:9), and have even allowed for the integration of non-Israelites in Israel (e.g., Zech 2:15[11]).

Our findings thus allow for the coherence of the nations theme across the Twelve as long as the unique contribution of each book to that composite picture remains intact.¹⁷ As soon as one obscures the temporal, lexical, and semantic facets of the characterization of the nations in a given book, the feasibility of finding the theme to be coherent across the Twelve is reduced, not increased, since one thereby obscures the limits, qualifications, and selectivity that bound the book's treatment of the theme.¹⁸

It should be stressed that this claim of thematic coherence applies only to the theme of the non-Israelite nations, and cannot be applied to other

17 This conclusion parallels M. Sweeney's contention, based in part on the various orders of the collection in antiquity, that "the Book of the Twelve must be viewed as both a literary work in and of itself... as well as a collection of twelve independently composed prophetic books." Sweeney, "Synchronic and Diachronic Concerns in Reading the Book of the Twelve Prophets," in *Perspectives on the Formation of the Book of the Twelve. Methodological Foundations—Redactional Processes—Historical Insights* (ed. R. Albertz, J. Nogalski, and J. Wöhrle; BZAW 433; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 21–33 (32).

18 Recall R. Rendtorff's conclusion that "The diachronic features are not only obvious but are marked explicitly by the different datings of a number of writings. On the other hand, those who gave the writings their shape (whatever we call them) obviously wanted the reader to read the writings [of the 12] as a connected whole and to reflect on their different messages." Rendtorff, "How to Read the Book of the Twelve as a Theological Unity," 87.

themes, or to the Twelve as a whole, without appropriate warrant.¹⁹ Despite the detailed analysis of the nations-theme in the Twelve offered here, a full-orbed argument for the coherence of the Twelve as a collection (whose nature remains unclear) requires further clarification of the nature of the collection, development of parameters by means of which its themes can be traced, and resolution of questions of literary order, chronological location, and so on. Here a number of possible paths present themselves, even within the limits of the methodological orientation this study has set for itself.²⁰

The guarded affirmation that the nations-theme can be traced coherently across the Twelve reflects an appreciation of the significant diversity that appears within each of the books that make up the Twelve, and of the far more difficult task of demonstrating the coherence of the collection as a whole with respect to that theme. Unlike views that attribute differences within a book or within the collection to different redactors whose work drew upon material that by definition sits uneasily in the books which now contain it but which simultaneously forms a kind of unifying belt across the collection, a conclusion that favors the coherence of the theme in all its attestations must take account of more data and diversity than a redactional approach that creates smaller, internally coherent sections. Accordingly, understatement is *de rigueur*. At the same time, affirming the coherence of the Twelve with respect to the nations-theme does not necessarily entail its literary unity, and this study's approach has consistently stressed the importance of each book's setting(s) and characteristics as inseparable from its treatment of non-Israelites. This appears to leave open the question of whether the unity of the collection as described here is more compositional or holistic in nature, a knotty problem to which we will return below.

19 Note T. Collins's attempt to find thematic unity across the Twelve, *The Mantle of Elijah: The Redaction Criticism of the Prophetic Books* (The Biblical Seminar 20; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), and A. Scharf's exploration of the ramifications of the Twelve's canonical location, which means among other things that "die theologische Profile der Einzelschriften im Rahmen der veränderten Sichtweise in ihrem kanonische Anspruch im besten Sinne relativiert, d. h. in Beziehung zu anderen Prophetien gesetzt werden." "Das Zwölfprophetenbuch als redaktionelle GroÙeinheit," *TLZ* 133 (2008): 227–46 (243).

20 Note the approaches of Rendtorff, "How to Read the Book of the Twelve as a Theological Unity," Sweeney, "Synchronic and Diachronic Concerns in Reading the Book of the Twelve Prophets," Peterson, "Israel and the Nations in the Later Latter Prophets," B. Bibberger, "Umkehr als Leitthema im Zwölfprophetenbuch," *ZAW* 123 (2011): 565–79, and J.T. LeCureux, *The Thematic Unity of the Book of the Twelve* (Hebrew Bible Monographs; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2012).

14.3.4 *Coherence and Order*

If the five classifications developed near the start of this chapter are even partially correct, it is clear that the nations-theme does not follow a definable trajectory across the Twelve in their literary orders. At various points in our study we have noted tension or abrupt changes in perspective between adjacent books in the Masoretic order, and most of these tensions remain in the oldest LXX order.²¹ Expressed in terms of the five classes proposed above, the MT order yields 3-5-5-1-5-5-4-2-5-5-5-5, while the LXX order yields 3-5-5-5-1-5-4-2-5-5-5-5 (recalling that Nahum and perhaps other books could fit in more than one class).

Even if the nations theme is coherent on the conceptual level across the collection, the highly irregular ordering of the various classes identified here suggests that the theme did not play a determinative role in the MT or LXX arrangements. This corroborates Sweeney's argument that "the differing orders of the constituent books of the Book of the Twelve indicate that these books must be viewed as discrete compositions within the whole that can be shifted in sequence according to an overarching view of their respective significance within the larger form of the Book of the Twelve."²² Alternatively, the collectors' goal may have been to produce just such a *mélange* that highlighted the polyvalence of the nations given their many distinct characterizations and roles in Israel's history and theological traditions by means of an intentional thematic irregularity, but the predominance of positive perspectives on the nations (i.e., class 5) make this unlikely.²³

14.3.5 *Coherence and Text*

In order to read the Twelve as something more than an amorphous collection of essentially independent books, one must be convinced that the traces

21 Sweeney, "Synchronic and Diachronic Concerns," and E. Ben Zvi, "Twelve Prophetic Books or 'The Twelve'?", in *Forming Prophetic Literature* (ed. J.W. Watts and P.R. House; JSOTSup 235; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 125-56, remind us that orders other than those attested in the Masoretic and predominant LXX traditions exist. Sweeney argues that the LXX order is older while R. Fuller argues for the priority of the MT order in "The Form and Formation of the Book of the Twelve: The Evidence from the Judean Desert," in *Forming Prophetic Literature* (ed. J.W. Watts and P.R. House; JSOTSup 235; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 86-101. At nearly the same time, B. Jones argued for the priority of the order apparently attested in 4QXII^a; Jones, *The Formation of the Book of the Twelve: A Study in Text and Canon* (SBLDS 149; Atlanta: Scholars, 1995).

22 Sweeney, "Synchronic and Diachronic Concerns," 31.

23 In other words, the 'pattern' observable in 'patterned incoherence' is absent; cf. R. Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 133.

and logic of those responsible for the collection are so clear that their cohesive and coherent force overwhelms the disunifying, book-creating effect of the incipits and other boundaries of each book and their different historical settings.²⁴ Moreover, the unifying features of the collection must predominate over the many types of difference that it exhibits in its varied perspectives, thematic development, selectivity, and so on.²⁵ It is of course conceivable that the collectors would have taken into account the historical settings and unique presentations of the nations in each book as they forged the collection, but this would remove all traces of incoherence if it is imagined as a *text-creating* process.²⁶ Such a *tour de force* would make the redactor disappear, rendering impossible any confident identification of his work. For a variety of reasons, diachronic approaches habitually conceive of a less gifted or less ambitious group of redactors or collectors who, while creating a wide variety of lexical and semantic connections between the books they sewed together, did not fully succeed in effacing their tracks or in reconciling contradictory perspectives within individual books or across the collection so as to produce large-scale coherence at the level of the collection as a whole or at the level of individual books.²⁷

These observations suggest that near the center of the divergence between synchronic/holistic and diachronic/compositional approaches to the Twelve are different definitions of a 'text' and, consequently, of a 'theme.'²⁸ To return

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- 24 So Ben Zvi, "Twelve Prophetic Books or 'The Twelve'?", 125–56. For arguments that they are late, see E. Gersternberger, "The Twelve: Headlines and Textcorpus," in *The New Form Criticism and the Book of the Twelve* (ed. M. Boda, M. Floyd, and C. Toffelmire; SBL Ancient Near Eastern Monographs; Atlanta: SBL, forthcoming). For arguments that their significance varies (in part because some appear within books), see J.D.W. Watts, "Superscriptions and Incipits in the Book of the Twelve," in *Reading and Hearing*, 110–24.
- 25 Recall Cuffey's four types of coherence (internal, structural, perspectival, thematic, in "Remnant, Redactor, and Biblical Theologian"), and the fact that some are more evident across at least portions of the Twelve than others. Whether such coherence justifies approaching them as one book remains an open question.
- 26 See Sweeney's remarks in "Synchronic and Diachronic Concerns," 23–24.
- 27 If these inconsistencies were evident to the redactors, one wonders why they did not erase them, since communication is effective only if it is coherent. Jeremiah's observation that redactional interplay can go in both directions further complicates the question; J. Jeremiah, "The Interrelationship between Amos and Hosea," in J.W. Watts and P.R. House (eds.), *Forming Prophetic Literature* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 172–86.
- 28 I leave this intentionally vague because the basis of the divergence will *mutatis mutandis* be related to text or theme depending on the issue or passage. From a theoretical point of view, the 'text' is the fundamental issue, since once its ontological status is settled, the 'theme' question will be determined within the limits of that text.

once again to J. Wöhrle's work, a redactional layer such as *Fremdvölker 1* is defined in terms of its semantics: the layer is constituted of sayings which foresee a universal judgment of all non-Israelite nations as a group.²⁹ By definition, such a layer is coherent, because its constituent passages make only that claim. At the same time, the books in which one identifies this redactional layer must display sufficient incoherence (or incohesion) around a given pericope, on that subject, to allow the reader to identify the redaction in the first place. As a result, redactional and related approaches produce not an organic collection that is more coherent than otherwise, but a collection or anthology of juxtaposed, disharmonious works bound together by redactional links that prevent the otherwise natural separation and independent existence of the constituent writings.³⁰ Paradoxically, as I have argued above, it is precisely the historical, conceptual, and structural integration of a pericope in an individual book that often allows the reader to account for apparent incoherence on bases found in the individual book when treated as a text in itself.

These issues highlight some of the differences between approaches that separate different or apparently divergent views on the one hand, and approaches that attempt to integrate them into a more complex whole on the other. There is also a related divergence in terms of how these approaches handle themes. A theme by definition takes into account all statements relevant to the subject that it develops, yet redactional approaches can by their nature only draw selectively on the material that makes up the theme (because that material is heterogeneous in terms of the criteria used to define the redaction).³¹ This difference is both theoretical and methodological, and calls for further reflection.³²

29 J. Wöhrle, *Die frühen Sammlungen des Zwölfprophetenbuches. Entstehung und Komposition* (BZAW 360; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 465–66; *Der Abschluss*, 23.

30 Some of M. Beck's comments on the Twelve as an 'anthology' suggest similar concerns. By 'anthology' Beck means a collection of texts that are influenced by their new context to only a limited degree, and in the case of the Twelve have an intentional order and possess cohesion or coherence (he does not use either term) primarily through their interlocking chronology, keywords, and thematic continuity rather than through the redaction of the anthology as such; Beck, "Das Dodekapropheton als Anthologie," ZAW 118 (2006): 558–83 (573, 577–79).

31 See R. Fowler (ed.), *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms* (New York: Routledge, 1987), 248.

32 Interestingly, there is little theoretical reflection on these points in the suggestively titled P.L. Redditt and A. Scharf (eds.), *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve* (BZAW 325; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003).

14.4 Directions for Future Research

To conclude, I will briefly note a few of the most salient research questions that this study has raised and express the hope that these questions and the study as a whole contribute to continued, methodologically self-aware exploration of the Book of the Twelve.

14.4.1 *What is a Text?*

As we have seen, the ontological status of a text remains an open question in studies focused on the Twelve.³³ Defining the nature of the Twelve (intentional collection, anthology, or assemblage of independent writings) determines the feasibility of thematic, redactional, or other explorations. Much remains to be done here.³⁴

14.4.2 *How Much Coherence is Enough?*

This study has argued that the incoherence—coherence relationship is a spectrum rather than simply a binary opposition, and that more attention must be given to the spectrum itself. Especially in the context of the Twelve, attention must be given to the varying levels of coherence that the different books possess. As it is, redactional layers are often extended across the Twelve as if the material they include were equally discontinuous with its various contexts throughout the collection, when in some cases evidence points toward the feasibility of integrating more than one perspective on the nations in a particular pericope or book. It is also important to consider the relative confidence with which one affirms coherence based on the text without appeal to hypothetical compositional processes over against the confidence appropriate to a highly complex (if highly coherent) compositional solution. In particular, one must remember that the degree of uncertainty associated with each compositional

33 See A.F. Campbell, S.J., "Form Criticism's Future," in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (ed. M. Sweeney and E. Ben Zvi; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 15–31, esp. 24.

34 See C. Seitz's comments on trying to preserve individuality and collectivity in the Twelve in *The Goodly Fellowship of the Prophets: The Achievement of Association in Canon Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 87 n. 14, and the more extensive analysis of Beck, "Das Dodekapropheton als Anthologie." A notable work on the nature of literary texts is L. Morenz and S. Schorch (eds.), *Was ist ein Text? Alttestamentliche, ägyptologische und altorientalische Perspektiven* (BZAW 362; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012).

stage contributes to the overall uncertainty of the theory.³⁵ In the same vein, the criteria for identifying redaction must be established in such a way that simplistic dichotomies are avoided and the possibility of reasonably complex thinking on the part of the author is preserved.³⁶

14.4.3 *Cohesion vis-à-vis Coherence, Synchrony, and Diachrony*

This study has interacted regularly with comparatively negative evaluations of coherence of the nations-theme in the Twelve. On the basis of the primacy of semantic coherence over surface-level cohesion, it has argued that in some cases redaction-critical and other compositional approaches that depend on the identification of incoherence (or at least incohesion) should give more attention to coherence. In other cases, synchronic or holistic approaches that overlook surface-level, chronological, or semantic details in pursuit of an overstated coherence need to reckon with those facets of the text and the consequent complexity that they produce in the book in question.

An important goal of the study is to demonstrate the value of coherence as an interpretative perspective, not in the sense that it is to be assumed but rather that it offers a relatively comprehensive perspective on the text. In particular, attention to coherence allows interpreters to attend to the full spectrum of textual information, which can be partially overlooked when one adopts a perfunctory synchronic approach over against a diachronic approach, or vice

35 In Landy's words, "a proposal with two-thirds (2/3) probability will decrease to four-ninths (4/9) at the second stage and to only 16 in 81 chances of being correct in the third stage." F. Landy, "Three Sides of a Coin: In Conversation with Ben Zvi and Nogalski, 'Two Sides of a Coin,'" *JHS* 10 (2010): article 11, 17 n. 52. See in more detail J. Berman, "A Response: Three Points of Methodology," *JHS* 10 (2010): article 9, esp. 43–44: if a conclusion rests on multiple factors, "we must compute the likelihood of each factor, and multiply them, for a final determination of probability" (43).

36 Regarding the former point, Sweeney argues against making "thin formal and linguistic bases, such as alleged Deuteronomistic language, as well as the influence of later theological categories, such as eschatology and the Day of YHWH" the grounds for identifying far-reaching redactional undertakings. "Synchronic and Diachronic Concerns," 22. His concern is well grounded in light of the fact that meaning is created only by combinations of words at the sentence and (especially) higher levels; cf. J. Barr, *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), and the other literature cited and discussed in chapter 1. Regarding the latter point, one thinks of the frequent assumption that woe and weal cannot be part of the same coherent discourse; against this supposition see A. Millard, "From Woe to Weal: Completing a Pattern in the Bible and the Ancient Near East," in *Let Us Go Up to Zion: Essays in Honour of H.G.M. Williamson on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (ed. I. Provan and M. Boda; VTSup 153; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 193–202.

versa.³⁷ The dichotomy between diachronic and synchronic approaches has been criticized, and with good reason, due to its oversimplification of the issues involved.³⁸ Giving increased attention to semantic coherence helps interpreters avoid the shortsightedness that can afflict practitioners of a narrowly-focused method, since it brings to the fore both explicit diachronic features (headings, chronological shifts within the book, etc.) and the “organization, conceptualization, and concerns of the text as a whole.”³⁹

14.4.4 *The Israel/Judah theme in the Twelve*

Given their almost constant interrelation, there is an urgent need to complement existing studies of the nations in the Twelve with exploration of the Israel/Judah theme.⁴⁰ The creation of a remnant in Israel/Judah in particular,

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- 37 Still other facets or levels of coherence exist but lie outside the scope of this study, with cognitive grammar and discourse linguistics meriting special attention. See on the former R. Troxel, “Confirming Coherence in Joel 3 with Cognitive Grammar,” *ZAW* 125 (2013): 578–92, and the latter, B. Isaksson, “The Textlinguistics of the Suffering Servant: Subordinate Structures in Isaiah 52,13–53,12,” in *En pāsē grammatikē sophiā: Saggi di linguistica ebraica in onore di Alviero Niccacci, ofm* (ed. G. Geiger; Milan: Franciscan, 2011), 173–212; T. Notarius, “Poetic Discourse and the Problem of Verbal Tenses in the Oracles of Balaam,” *HS* 49 (2008): 55–86.
- 38 See esp. K.P. Hong, “Synchrony and Diachrony in Contemporary Biblical Interpretation,” *CBQ* 75 (2013): 521–39; J.C. de Moor (ed.), *Synchronic or Diachronic? A Debate on Method in Old Testament Exegesis* (*OtSt* 34; Leiden: Brill, 1995), and the literature they cite.
- 39 Sweeney, “Synchronic and Diachronic Concerns,” 22–23. As the methodological discussion of chapter 1 shows, the approach adopted here has much in common with the “new form criticism,” in particular its interest in the whole text. See A.J. Campbell, “Form Criticism’s Future,” in *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (ed. M.A. Sweeney and E. Ben Zvi; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 15–31; M. Boda, M. Floyd and C. Toffelmire (eds.), *The New Form Criticism and the Book of the Twelve* (SBLANEM; Atlanta: SBL, forthcoming 2015); and M. Sweeney, “Introduction,” in idem, *Reading Prophetic Books: Form, Intertextuality, and Reception in Prophetic and Post-Biblical Literature* (FAT 89; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 1–16, which reflects on the interdisciplinarity of much contemporary form criticism.
- 40 See more generally E. Ben Zvi, “Inclusion in and Exclusion from Israel as Conveyed by the Use of the Term ‘Israel’ in Post-Monarchic Biblical Texts,” in *The Pitcher is Broken: Memorial Essays for Gösta W. Ahlström* (ed. S.W. Holloway and L.K. Handy; JSOTSup 190; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 95–149; S.S. Scatolini Apóstolo, “On the Elusiveness and Malleability of ‘Israel,’” *JHS* 6 (2006): article 7; A. Mühling, “*Blickt auf Abraham, euren Vater*: Abraham als Identifikationsfigur des Judentums in der Zeit des Exils und des Zweiten Tempels (FRLANT 236; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011).

since it parallels an important dynamic in the nations-theme, would surely illuminate various aspects of the nations-theme, yet since Hasel's study little has been done.⁴¹

14.4.5 *The 'Other' in the Twelve and Beyond*

Closely tied to the idea of the nations, although relevant to Israel/Judah as well, is the concept of the 'other.'⁴² Interpretations with this optic could make significant contributions to the study of the Twelve since the collection frequently presents the nations and Israel/Judah as members of the same supra-national group based on shared religious characteristics, while consistently distinguishing them on the lexical level. Behind this lies an ethnicity-religion relationship that allows for strong condemnations of certain groups that are ostensibly identified under national or ethnic labels while characterizing those same groups in predominantly religious terms, with the result that the nations are never condemned for being ethnically other.⁴³ Likewise, Israelite ethnicity is consistently disregarded as a possible basis for divine favor or deliverance, which is tied instead to religious factors. Explorations of the 'other' in the Twelve can initially draw on similar studies focused on other prophetic books,

41 See G.F. Hasel, *The Remnant: The History and Theology of the Remnant Idea from Genesis to Isaiah* (Andrews University Monographs 5; Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1972); J. Hausmann, *Israels Rest: Studien zum Selbstverständnis der nachexilischen Gemeinde* (BWANT 124; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1987); G.A. King, "The Remnant in Zephaniah," *BSac* 151/604 (1994): 414–27; P.R. Noble, "The Remnant in Amos 3–6: A Prophetic Paradox," *HBT* 19 (1997): 122–47; A. Lo, "The Remnant Motif in Amos, Micah and Zephaniah," in *A God of Faithfulness: Essays in Honour of J. Gordon McConville on His 60th Birthday* (ed. J.A. Grant, A. Lo, and G.J. Wenham; LHBOTS 538; New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 130–48.

42 Limited work has been done in this area. Note E. Runions, *Changing Subjects: Gender, Nation and Future in Micah* (Playing the Texts 7; London: Sheffield Academic, 2001); J.P. Bosman, *Social identity in Nahum: A theological-ethical enquiry* (Biblical Intersections 1; Piscataway: Gorgias, 2008); A. Finitisis, "The Other in Haggai and Zechariah 1–8," in *The "Other" in Second Temple Judaism: Essays in Honor of John J. Collins* (ed. D.C. Harlow et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 116–31; A. Hagedorn, *Die Anderen im Spiegel: Israels Auseinandersetzung mit den Völkern in den Büchern Nahum, Zefanja, Obadja und Joel* (BZAW 414; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011); D.C. Timmer, "Jonah's Theology of the Nations: The Interface of Religious and Ethnic Identity," *RB* 120 (2013): 13–23.

43 For some similar conclusions that also stress the unique aspects of the views regarding the nations in Nahum, Zephaniah, Obadiah, and Joel, see Hagedorn, *Die Anderen im Spiegel*.

and eventually contribute to efforts to understand the various ways the other is viewed across the whole span of the HB/OT.⁴⁴

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- 44 For representative studies in the prophetic corpus, see Hagedorn, *Die Anderen im Spiegel*, and, outside the Twelve, R.E. Clements, *Jerusalem and the Nations: Studies in the Book of Isaiah* (HBM 16; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2011); M.K.Y.H. Hom, *The Characterization of the Assyrians in Isaiah: Synchronic and Diachronic Perspectives* (LHBOTS 559; New York: T & T Clark, 2012); H.G.L. Peels, "'You Shall Certainly Drink!': The Place and Significance of the Oracles Against the Nations in the Book of Jeremiah," *EJT* 16 (2007): 81–91; and C.L. Crouch, "Ezekiel's Oracles against the Nations in Light of a Royal Ideology of Warfare," *JBL* 130 (2011): 473–92.

More broadly, see especially K. Sparks, *Ethnicity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1998); M.G. Brett (ed.), *Ethnicity and the Bible* (BIS 19; Leiden: Brill, 1996); R.S. Sadler, *Can a Cushite Change His Skin? An Examination of Race, Ethnicity, and Othering in the Hebrew Bible* (LHBOTS 425; London: T & T Clark, 2005); N.K. Gottwald, "The Interplay of Religion and Ethnicity in Ancient Israel," in *To Break Every Yoke: Essays in Honor of Marvin L. Chaney* (ed. R.B. Coote and N.K. Gottwald; Social World of Biblical Antiquity; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2007), 28–39; K. Southwood, "Will Naomi's Nation be Ruth's Nation? Ethnic Translation as a Metaphor for Ruth's Assimilation within Judah," *Humanities* 3 (2014): 102–131; and the review of the field by J.C. Miller, "Ethnicity and the Hebrew Bible: Problems and Prospects," *CBR* 6 (2008): 170–213.

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